

## Race and Racism in Modern East Asia

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# Race and Racism in Modern East Asia

Western and Eastern Constructions

*Edited by*

Rotem Kowner and Walter Demel



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## CONVENTIONS

In accordance with commonly accepted practices in academic writing, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean names are given in the East Asian order, namely surnames first. Exceptions are made for Americans of East Asian ancestry and for East Asian authors who publish in English and give their surname last. Chinese names and terms are written according to the *pinyin* transliteration system; Japanese names and terms are written according to the revised Hepburn transliteration system and in consultation with the *Kodansha Encyclopedia* (Itakasa, 1983) and the 4th edition of *Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary* (Masuda, 1991), whereas romanization of given names follows *Nihonshi jinmei yomikata jiten* (Nichigai Asoshiëtsu, 2002); Korean names and terms follow the McCune–Reischauer transliteration system. The macrons above some of the Japanese names and terms indicate a long vowel (e.g., *Chūō Kōron*), except for commonly used terms or those adopted into the English lexicon (e.g., *shogun*).

Place names are spelled in the way most familiar to English-speaking readers, at least when an English version exists and when their pronunciation approximates their name in the original language (e.g., *Osaka*). In the same fashion, names of places of current importance are written according to present-day usage (e.g., *Seoul* and *Beijing*). For unfamiliar place names we have used the modern spellings employed in the countries concerned in the most commonly used transliteration. Names of locations in prewar Manchuria are written according to the Wade-Giles system, in consultation with the *Historical Dictionary of the Russo-Japanese War* (Kowner, 2006a).

The dates in the book are according to the Gregorian calendar rather than either the Julian calendar, which was used in tsarist Russia until 1918, or the modern Japanese calendar, which is still in use today. The Julian calendar, used in many books on Russian history, was 12 days “behind” the Gregorian calendar during the nineteenth century and 13 days behind it during the twentieth century. Hence, the date of the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, for example, which was 26 January 1904 according to the Julian calendar in Russia, and the eighth day of the second month of the 37th year of the Meiji Era in Japan, appears in this book as 8 February 1904.



## PREFACE

Since World War II the concept of race has lost much of its social and political significance and undoubtedly its remaining appeal too. After the discovery of Nazi death camps and Japanese medical experiments, both established in the name of a superior race and nation, and following the achievements of the African-American Civil Rights Movement, it became increasingly abominable to subscribe to theories of race and to maintain explicit racist practices. In similar fashion, social policies that promoted racial discrimination were largely abandoned. In the United States, for example, the Supreme Court declared all forms of racial segregation unconstitutional in 1968, and by 1994 even South Africa, the last bastion of white supremacy, abandoned its Apartheid policy. Race is currently no longer a central concept in either biology or in the determination of individual civil status, nor does it serve as a gauge of national standing. Racism, however, has not disappeared. Although they are more implicit, individual beliefs and personal prejudices based on racial concepts are still common and seemingly far from eradicated.

This volume is an amalgam of multiple perspectives and paradigms on race and racism. One way among many of representing this multiplicity could be the geographical origin of the authors. The editors of this volume, for example, are both the inevitable product of “a distinctively European perspective,” as one perceptive reviewer has contended. Both are also a product of the postwar era. During our lifetime, and especially in the early years of our formation, the legacy of race was still strong although not as crucial as it had been only a few years earlier. After all, several years before our birth, the very existence of millions in Europe was determined by their alleged ties to one ‘race’ or the other. In this light, we regard the postwar era as a period of emancipation from the yoke of race; a time of vehement reaction against its tenets, and a rare opportunity for critical reflection on its past effects and possible alternatives. This is, of course, a subjective view whose validity and relevance may not necessarily be shared by others, North Americans and East Asians in particular. Our own writings on questions of race in East Asia—principally the region that comprises traditional and modern China, Japan and Korea—began almost simultaneously in the 1990s; one of us on China and the other on Japan. We were both fascinated with early European encounters

with those countries, and with both the initial high impressions of their peoples and their subsequent degradation since the eighteenth century.

Fascination aside, we both firmly believe that an examination of the racial nexus between the West and East Asia—past constructions, reactions and present legacy—is more than apt, especially today. Given the rapid reemergence of East Asia as a major player in the global economy and increasingly in global politics too, racism and prejudice seem to have shown their ugly faces once again. Moreover, the number of immigrants of East Asian origin has been growing spectacularly in recent years, notably in the United States and Australia, and this may lead to the resurrection of old but persistent prejudices. Understanding the history of racial constructions and racism, the mechanisms that operate them, and the reactions they cause might not solve deep-seated prejudices and fears, but may alleviate them and help decision-makers in taking actions towards more peaceful conflict resolution, on both the national and the communal levels.

We began to collaborate in 2007 in a joint effort to explore the conceptualization of race in East Asia and its intellectual, political and social impact on the region. We realized from the start that a comprehensive examination of this topic, taking both Western and East Asian perspectives into account and based on an assortment of regional and country-specific case studies, ought to be carried out by a broad spectrum of scholars and specialists. In other words, only a group of scholars representing a variety of fields and areas of expertise could come to grips with such a complex issue. Consequently, we initiated this collaborative project by promulgating a call for papers in major discussion groups on the Internet as well as directly soliciting papers from specific scholars, and eventually selected the most appropriate proposals. In late 2010, the two of us met at the University of the Armed Forces in Munich [Universität der Bundeswehr München] together with a group of scholars we invited to serve as discussants for the papers submitted to us. During a three-day workshop we discussed each paper at length, as well as the concepts of race and racism and their adoption, and then allowed for revisions.

This volume, the first product of a broader project on race and racism in East Asia, offers several unique features. Obviously, this is not the first study to examine Western views of the East Asian 'race' or 'races' in modern times, nor is it the first time in which a book is devoted to surveying East Asian reactions to these views, racial policies at home and abroad, or local racism of whatever origin. Nevertheless, it appears to be the first to juxtapose Western and East Asian views of race and actual racism and

explore their relations. With this feature in mind, we sought to answer a number of additional questions: First, when and why did Europeans form their initial racial views of East Asians and how did those pre- and early modern views herald the modern manifestation of racism against these groups? Was there a link between racism against East Asians in general and the views of and attitudes towards East Asian immigrants in the West? To what extent did Western racial theories shape racial views and policies in modern East Asia? What were the political, cultural and social outcomes of the East Asian emulation of the Western racial worldview? And finally, what were the consequences of the “racial” clash between the West and East Asia? We are aware that these issues are too complex and too broad to be answered definitively in a single volume. Nonetheless, the chapters presented here aim to engage these issues from several perspectives and provide what we believe to be substantial keys or insights to future elaborations of the issues we have explored.

During the preparation of this book, we became indebted to quite a few individuals and institutions. First and foremost, we are grateful to the participants. We were fortunate enough to collaborate with scholars who were not only extremely erudite but also highly cooperative and responsive to our suggestions and guidelines. In addition, we are indebted to a large number of individuals who were willing to review and comment on the manuscripts presented here. They include Daniel Barth, M.A., University of Munich; Dr. Miki Daliot-Bul, University of Haifa; Prof. Hans van Ess, University of Munich; Dr. Kai Filipiak, University of Leipzig; Prof. Raoul David Findeisen, Comenius University, Bratislava; Dr. Tobias Grill, University of the Armed Forces, Munich; Prof. Eckhart Hellmuth, University of Munich; Robert Kramm-Masaoka M.A., University of Tübingen; Prof. Sufen Sophia Lai, Grand Valley State University, Michigan; Dr. Daniel Leese, University of Freiburg; Dr. Annerose Menninger, University of the Armed Forces, Munich; Prof. Klaus Mühlhahn, Free University of Berlin; Prof. Peter Poertner, University of Munich; Prof. Sylvia Schraut, University of the Armed Forces, Munich, as well as four anonymous reviewers. We would also like to convey a similar token of appreciation to our research assistants. Dr. Anke Fischer-Kattner and Philipp Sandner at the University of the Armed Forces helped us conduct the workshop impeccably, whereas Nimrod Chiat, Guy Almog and Viki Ayzenberg at the University of Haifa were highly instrumental in making this volume legible during the final stages of editing. We are grateful to the German-Israeli Foundation (GIF) for supporting this joint research project since its inception, for facilitating our visits to a number of domestic and overseas libraries

and archives and for providing funds for the workshop. We would also like to thank the University of the Armed Forces, Munich for hosting the workshop and supporting this study.

Finally, we wish to pay tribute to our wives, Fabienne and Jutta, respectively, for unfailingly supporting this collaboration, as they have done with any of our scientific endeavors before and hopefully also after. For our children, Jasmine, Emmanuelle, Narkisse, and Amos in Israel and Cornelia and Michael in Germany, we wish a future in which books on such topics are obsolete; a world, as a certain poet from Liverpool once envisioned, of “No need for greed or hunger; A brotherhood of man; Imagine all the people; Sharing all the world.”

Rotem Kowner and Walter Demel

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## CHAPTER ONE

### MODERN EAST ASIA AND THE RISE OF RACIAL THOUGHT: POSSIBLE LINKS, UNIQUE FEATURES AND UNSETTLED ISSUES

Rotem Kowner and Walter Demel<sup>1</sup>

The idea of race is a modern phenomenon. While the word itself emerged in Southern Europe in the late Middle Ages, the concept began to crystallize during the eighteenth century and reached maturity a century later.<sup>2</sup> When the word 'race' was used for humans in earlier times, it meant a group of the same stock, tribe, people and even 'nation.' This broad and often indiscriminate use of the word does not mean that pre- and early modern Europeans did not employ some of its modern connotations, nor does it mean that non-Europeans did not use it. They definitely recognized various groups of people as having, for example, a common ancestry, an affinity to other groups, certain characteristic mental capacities and behavior features and specific physical features, which, they hypothesized, were the result of climate and geographical habitat. It was only in the eighteenth century, however, that the concept of race began to denote large groups of people sharing a common geographical habitat and a hereditary physical and mental makeup. It was generally believed at the time that almost every human being belonged to one of just a few such races.

Since the early 1940s the concept of race has been under heavy attack on the grounds of its scientific validity and even its presumed fallacy.<sup>3</sup> The horrifying events of World War II, the Nazi destruction of European Jewry in particular, spurred the retreat from the race idea, but that was not the only reason. For some, it was a question of pure science. Among the weapons used in this delegitimization campaign were the findings of the new field of population genetics. Conducted with an unprecedented rigor and integrity, studies in this field demonstrated that genetic variation is more

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<sup>1</sup> Rotem Kowner is gratefully acknowledging the financial support granted by the Israeli Academy of Science (ISF) for his part in the research for this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> For the etymology of the word *race* see chapter 2 of the present volume.

<sup>3</sup> For landmark studies challenging the validity of the concept of race, see, for example, Montagu, 1942; Lewontin, 1972; Wade, 1993. For even earlier changing concepts of race, at least in interwar Britain and the United States, see Barkan, 1992. It should also be noted that some Columbia University scholars criticized racial concepts from a historical point of view as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. Cf. Winston, 2004: 4–5

common at the individual, rather than the group level, and that human traits are distributed along many lines that rarely, if ever, correspond to the traditional division of races.<sup>4</sup> Many scholars currently accept the idea that the division of mankind into broad races has neither biological validity nor social justification. Conventions, nonetheless, die slowly. In the natural sciences, medicine and genetics in particular, many researchers still regard race as a valid independent variable.<sup>5</sup> The vast majority of them, it should be qualified, do not assign a value judgment to race and certainly do not imply the existence of a racial hierarchy.

Many others, however, seem to oppose this approach and refer to it pejoratively as racialism—namely, a belief in the existence and significance of racial categories.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, in the humanities and social sciences, at least, very few would use race as a variable today unless they deal with intergroup relations.<sup>7</sup> The majority, instead, regard it as a social designation or as an obsolete legacy of a dark past. One of the scholars who have set the pace in this respect has been the sociologist Pierre L. van den Berghe, who viewed race as “socially [rather than biologically] defined on the basis of physical criteria” more than forty years ago.<sup>8</sup> Some scholars tend to reject even this seemingly progressive definition. In fact, a growing number of scholars deny the existence of any reality associated with race altogether. “There is no conceptual basis for race,” one of them has asserted recently, “except racism.”<sup>9</sup>

Racism, this alleged survivor of the race idea, is a much newer concept and at the same time a far older phenomenon. Incredibly, the term appeared for the first time as late as 1933–34 in an unpublished manuscript written by the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) and then in its English translation in 1938.<sup>10</sup> A Jewish homosexual and liberal physician

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<sup>4</sup> E.g., Graves, 2001: 155–192.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Bhopal, 1997; Kaplan and Bennett, 2003. For specific studies, see Risch, 2002; Wang, 2007; Lohmueller, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> The term ‘racialism’ first appeared in the 1907 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* and initially implied a meaning similar to that of present-day racism, namely, the “belief in the superiority of a particular race.”

<sup>7</sup> See, however, the controversial work of the Canadian psychologist Philippe Rushton (1988, 1994, 1995) and the contentious book *The Bell Curve* for the impact of race in North America (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994). For a critical review of and a rejoinder to this book, see Frazer, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Van den Berghe, 1967: 9. Sixteen years later, the same author slightly modified his definition and suggested that race is “a socially defined group which sees itself and is seen by others as being phenotypically different from other groups.” In Van den Berghe, 1983: 222.

<sup>9</sup> Hirschman, 2004: 408.

<sup>10</sup> See Hirschfeld, 1938: 5.

whose research institute was burnt soon after Hitler's rise to power, Hirschfeld formulated the term in light of Nazi persecution, but soon it embraced far broader phenomena.<sup>11</sup> It currently denotes a wide spectrum of definitions, ranging from the specific, such as "the valuation of differences, real or imaginary . . .,"<sup>12</sup> through "belief in the inherent, immutable, and significant inferiority of an entire physically characterized people . . .,"<sup>13</sup> to the general, such as the "systematic denial of a population's humanity."<sup>14</sup> A restrictive outlook on racism may limit it to categorization on the basis of purported biological differences. British sociologist Michael Banton, for instance, considers racism a doctrine in which "a man's behavior is determined by stable inherited characters deriving from separate racial stocks having distinct attributes and usually considered to stand to one another in relations of superiority and inferiority."<sup>15</sup> Obviously, this definition may not satisfy all. At present, however, some tend to regard racism as involving categorization "on the basis of any set of criteria which will allow [collective] difference to be asserted."<sup>16</sup> Some scholars, in fact, go as far as to describe racism in terms of motives and even outcomes rather than content. For George Fredrickson, for instance, racism

originates from a mindset that regards 'them' as different from 'us' in ways that are permanent and unbridgeable. This sense of difference provides a motive or rationale for using our power advantage to treat the ethnoracial Other in ways that we would regard as cruel or unjust if applied to members of our own group . . .<sup>17</sup>

Despite the etymological similarity between *racism* and *race*, the relations between these two concepts are neither evident nor necessarily of a cause and effect nature. Theoretically, one may construe a theory of race without racism. Many researchers in the medical sciences, for instance, do not hesitate to use race as a category and more often as an independent variable in their studies, but do not necessarily subscribe to racist paradigms. They frequently do so merely to maximize the predictive capabilities of their findings and to underscore their greater relevance to specific populations (the same way sex and age are used), rather than to offer any judgment on these populations or its medical conditions. In the same vein,

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<sup>11</sup> For Hirschfeld's life and work, see Herzer, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Memmi, 2000: 101.

<sup>13</sup> Aptheker, 1992.

<sup>14</sup> Harris, 1999: 437.

<sup>15</sup> Banton, 1967: 8.

<sup>16</sup> Jenkins, 1997: 83. For a similar view see Omi and Winant, 1987: 145, 172.

<sup>17</sup> Fredrickson, 2002: 9.

one may envision racism without an elaborated theory of race. People may hate and discriminate members of another group solely on the basis of that membership while remaining oblivious to any theory that explicates the differences with that group. Jacques Derrida's observation that "there is no racism without a language" seems right, but the vocabulary he meant does not necessarily have to include the word *race*.<sup>18</sup> 'Blood,' 'origins,' 'birth,' 'color,' 'tribe' are only a small segment of a rich vocabulary that suggest a naturalist and even creationist discourse of racial distinction and discrimination. It is not surprising, then, that a number of scholars have recently argued that racism was prevalent in antiquity, and in Greece and Rome in particular, long before any explicit theory of race, let alone the term itself, came into being.<sup>19</sup>

In a post-Holocaust world, "race" is a notion which is no longer acceptable in German-speaking countries. However, many people regard "race" as un-politically correct in other languages as well. In actuality, very few people anywhere would currently wish to be referred to as "racists." In this book, however, it is not primarily the question of so-called politically-correct terminology which counts, but historical analysis. To start with, we are convinced that "race" is invalid as a biological concept.<sup>20</sup> This does not mean that we deny that there are certain differences, not only between individuals but also between "groups of men"—some even relating to outer appearances.<sup>21</sup> The core of group differences, however, lies in their identity. Thus, in our view, as in Bernard Boxill's, the "construction of racial identities"<sup>22</sup> are "social constructions" of varying historical importance.<sup>23</sup> Like the term "race," the definition of "people" is not straightforward either. The international community has never defined what a "people" really is in international law for reasons of power. Peoples are only regarded as "nations" when they have a "nation state". The "United Nations" are, in fact, a community of states! Different academic

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<sup>18</sup> Derrida, 1986: 331.

<sup>19</sup> E.g., Sherwin-White, 1967; Delacampagne, 1983; Hund, 2003: 8–10; Isaac, 2005. See, however, Tuplin, 1999.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Brace, 2005: 4–16.

<sup>21</sup> We are aware of the human tendency to focus on specific and often atypical and irregular differences between groups. For critique and rejection of the phenotypical reality behind the "races," see Wade, 1993: 17–34; Cavalli-Sforza et al., 1994: 19–22.

<sup>22</sup> Dikötter, 1997.

<sup>23</sup> Boxill, 2001: 1–2; Augstein (1996: ix–x, fn. 2), at least, argues that "... it is useless to talk of 'human races' unless one is prepared to take the existence of many thousands of races into account."



disciplines occasionally establish various definitions of “people”. However, none of these were ever accepted by all those involved or concerned.<sup>24</sup>

Our own stance regarding race and racism—which reveals itself in this volume—is liberal and seems, in our view, to be accommodating enough. Needless to say, we concur with current views of race as a cultural construction rather than a biological reality and see no advantage in artificial divisions of mankind into broad categories. This understanding does not alter the great impact the concept of race has had on Westerners’ views of East Asians and on East Asians’ view of the world in modern times, nor does it diminish the need to study this impact. In this volume nonetheless, we tend to prefer a more straightforward definition of race that regards it as “a local geographic or global human population distinguished as a more or less distinct group by genetic [or hereditary] transmitted physical characteristics [real or imagined],” to a broader definition, similar to ethnicity, that regards it as “a [large] group of people united or classified on the basis of a common history, nationality, or geographic distribution.”<sup>25</sup> Some thorny terminological questions are nonetheless left open: How should one distinguish between the oft-confused terms ‘race’, ‘peoples,’ and ‘ethnic groups’? Does ethnicity have a meaning other than “belonging to a race or a people”? Is ethnology just another word for a doctrine based on racial thinking? These questions are all the more difficult since these terms have no precise meaning.<sup>26</sup> There has never been a consensus on how many “races” exist among humanity—not even within the “guild” of racial theorists—and the same applies to the other categories!<sup>27</sup> In addition, they differ in extent even between (Western) languages. A German, for example, would translate “the human race” as “*die Menschheit*,” not as “*die menschliche Rasse*.”<sup>28</sup> Finally, the terms’ connotations have changed in the past few decades. As shown by the terminological change from “Negro” to “Black” to “Afro-American” and “African

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<sup>24</sup> Fisch, 2010: 21.

<sup>25</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary* (1992), quoted in Graves, 2001: 6. For definitions of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘ethnic group,’ see Wallman, 1986: 229; Gracia, 2007: 7.

<sup>26</sup> Consequently, Banton (1987), divides his book into chapters on “Race as lineage,” “Race as type,” “Race as subspecies,” etc.

<sup>27</sup> As early as 1836, the French anatomist Pierre Paul Broc (1782–1848) spoke of a “real chaos” (“*véritable chaos*”) of taxonomies with which any scholar might have created any number of divisions, ranging from three to 16. See Broc, 1836: 22. Cf. Demel, 1997: 64–65.

<sup>28</sup> Using a term like “Yellow Race” would have likewise required a precise common notion of what ‘yellow’ is. There are languages, however, which have no word corresponding to the particular hue we would define as ‘yellow’ Cf. Fan, 1996: 43.

American,” ascribing identity can be subject to varying understanding at different times, whether positive, neutral or pejorative.

The line that separates “ethnic group” from “racial group” was and still is vague. In the premodern world it was ethnicity, rather than race, that served as “one of the central axes of alignment and division” and dominated the European discourse on the Other.<sup>29</sup> It was probably Julian Huxley and Alfred Cort Haddon who first used it as a substitute term for ‘race’ in 1935.<sup>30</sup> But as Robert Young and Kamala Visweswaran have argued, the actual shift took place after World War II, when the term ‘ethnicity’ was adopted by UNESCO as part of the post-1945 assault on the idea of race. In this postwar reformulation, Young says, “race emphasizes nature rather than nurture, ethnicity emphasizes nurture rather than nature. This makes it just a bit too simple, however, for neither occupies exclusive ends of the spectrum.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the concept of ethnicity differs from the closely related term race in that the latter refers to grouping based mostly upon criteria that in the past have been presumed to be biological, while the former encompasses additional cultural factors. Ethnicity, in this sense, not only denotes culturally acquired characteristics but also embodies inherent cultural interpretation of common descent.<sup>32</sup> This does not mean that “race” is used as an exclusively biological term today.<sup>33</sup> In fact, the American Anthropological Association has recently recommended mostly non-genetic criteria for categorizing the population of the United States.<sup>34</sup> These considerations lead us to the conclusion that we should make more precise distinctions. Hereafter, we shall use “race” only as a category of an outdated and supposedly “natural,” i.e., “biological” concept for dividing humanity and we shall speak of “people”

<sup>29</sup> Smith, 1986: 46.

<sup>30</sup> Huxley and Haddon, 1935: 108.

<sup>31</sup> Young, 2008: x; Visweswaran, 1998: 76. Also see the way in which an ethnic group (or ethnicity) is defined by Wikipedia: “... a group of people whose members identify with each other, through a common heritage, often consisting of a common language, a common culture (often including a shared religion) and/or an ideology that stresses common ancestry or endogamy.” See Wikipedia: Ethnic group. Another possible definition is “... a highly biologically self-perpetuating group sharing an interest in a homeland connected with a specific geographical area, a common language and traditions, including food preferences, and a common religious faith.” In Abel, 2003: 4.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Keyes, 1976: 202–213.

<sup>33</sup> In epistemological perspective, at least, the two terms are not much different. In both cases, argues Sandra Wallman, “it is the classifier’s *perception* of choice or immutability which is decisive; the differences observed and the way they are interpreted say as much about the classifier as about the classified.” In Wallman, 1986: 229.

<sup>34</sup> See “American Anthropological Association Response to OMB Directive 15.”

in the same sense as “ethnic groups,” namely as a cultural category which we still regard as useful.

As for racism, we decided to incorporate a relatively broad definition of racism that might be thought of as ethnocentrism, ethnic prejudice or mere xenophobia in other contexts. We are aware, of course, that not every generalization of the Other is racism.<sup>35</sup> Evidently, every culture has its own set of values and it is therefore almost inevitable that observers, whether travelers to another culture or armchair scholars, would judge the outer appearance, customs, laws, and so-called national character of members of another group from the standpoint of their culture.<sup>36</sup> But if one seeks to detect any inter-subjective ‘truth’ relating to the features of that group, one has to compare self-descriptions of the people involved with the descriptions of external observers. Two observers may agree that certain people are sharp-witted, but one of them may regard it as a positive characteristic, similar to intelligence and cleverness, while the other may regard it negatively, suggesting that these people are sly or even sneaky. Needless to say, any such attempt should desist from moral judgments insofar as this is possible.

Now as before, a grey area seems to separate racism from ethnic prejudice. While both deal with categorical generalizations based on subjective and usually inadequate data, what appears to set them apart is intent and negative moral judgment. Indeed, one wonders whether we can speak of racism if physical or mental differences are stated without implicit value judgments. Moreover, can we refer to ethnic generalizations when a positive judgment is implied? In some cases, we may concede that there are mild and even innocuous forms of racism, although they may easily transform into more blatant and hard-core racism. At stake, in both cases, is an implicit notion that underlies any ethnic generalization. It is the idea that certain abilities are inborn—mostly an incorrect and no doubt dangerous

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<sup>35</sup> Here we try to strike a balance between two more extreme positions. Though George M. Fredrickson concedes that in colloquial English the term “racism” is located anywhere between mere biological prejudices on the one hand and religious, cultural or xenophobic ones on the other, he wants to limit the notion to opinions which describe differences as innate, indelible, and immutable. Fredrickson, 2002: 5–6. Contrary to that, Wulf D. Hund extends the meaning of the term substantially when he defines racism as “a violent material and ideological process of de-socializing,” among which he even counts witch-hunts. Hund, 2006: 115, 95–100.

<sup>36</sup> See, however, Omi and Winant’s (1987: 145) sweeping definition of racism as “social practices which (implicitly or explicitly) attribute merits or allocate values to members of racially categorized groups solely because of their race.”

notion when generalized to an entire group. In view of these difficulties, we find Benjamin Isaac's recent definition of racism to offer an appropriate and flexible scope for this concept:

[It is] an attitude towards individuals and groups of peoples which posits a direct and linear connection between physical and mental qualities. It therefore attributes to those individuals and groups of peoples collective traits, physical, mental, and moral, which are constant and unalterable by human will, because they are caused by heredity factors or external influences, such as climate or geography, [or evolution]. The essence of racism is that it regards individuals as superior or inferior because they are believed to share imagined physical, mental, and moral attributes with the group to which they are deemed to belong, and it is assumed that they cannot change these traits individually.<sup>37</sup>

*East Asia in the Study of Race and Racism: Importance and Uniqueness*

The scholarship on race and racism seems to have reached a certain saturation. The publications on the concept of race, racial taxonomy, and race relations are legion, and many have been written in recent years.<sup>38</sup> This ever-growing crop of books and studies provides a detailed overview and analysis of the rise of this concept in early modern Europe, its winding evolution, its late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century proliferation, and its present state in various parts of the globe. There are even more publications about racism.<sup>39</sup> They examine the mechanism of this social and cultural phenomenon since ancient times—at least in a form of pre- or proto-racism, analyze the cognitive and other mechanisms that maintain it and underscore its destructive repercussions. But despite this vast corpus of scholarship, much of it focuses disproportionately on the attitudes towards and impact on relatively few groups. Notable among these are Black Africans in North America and Jews in Europe, and also to a lesser extent Native Americans and gypsies in these two continents, respectively. Admittedly,

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<sup>37</sup> Isaac, 2004: 23.

<sup>38</sup> Although this general literature is vast, the studies by Banton, 1977, 1987; Stepan, 1982; Rex and Mason, 1986; Smedley, 1993; Hannaford, 1996; Hutchinson and Smith, 1996; Augstein, 1996; Malik, 1996; Wheeler, 2000; Graves, 2001 and Eigen and Larrimore, 2006 are particularly noteworthy.

<sup>39</sup> For prominent recent studies of Western or 'classical' racism, see Delacampagne, 1983; Geiss, 1988; Memmi, 2000; Fredrickson, 2002; Isaac, 2004; Eliav-Feldon, Isaac and Ziegler, 2009.

these groups have occupied much of the attention of race ideologists and were the object and victim of long-standing discriminatory policies. Nonetheless, the story of race and racism is far more complex. After all, European race theories targeted many other groups, some of which are almost missing from the scholarship on race. No less importantly, Europeans have not been the sole producers of racial theories or the sole promulgators of racist agendas—certainly not in the twentieth century.

East Asians are an excellent case in point.<sup>40</sup> Theories of race and racism directed at these people or produced by them have received relatively little scholarly attention. This is all the more striking when one considers the place of East Asians in the racial taxonomies produced in eighteenth-century Europe, their sheer number during the nineteenth century (more than a third of humanity), their role in the racial conflicts of the twentieth century, and their economic and political importance at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This does not mean that no research has been carried out on the place of East Asians in this context. But in view of their political, economic and cultural significance, both at present and in the past, the research that links East Asians with racial issues is conspicuous in its dearth.<sup>41</sup> This state of affairs is more than evident when one takes the place of East Asians in the standard literature on race and racism into account. Admittedly, this literature has recently begun to

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<sup>40</sup> 'East Asia' (Chi. *Dong-yā*; Jpn. *Tōa*; Kor. *Dong-a*) is a modern geographic and political designation originating in the late nineteenth century. Earlier, Europeans used to refer to the region as 'Upper' India or 'Further' India, the Orient, and then as the Far East (still in use occasionally). Indigenous terms to the 'Orient' [literally, 'the Eastern Ocean'] were more consistent and are still in use (Chi. *Dong'yang*; Jpn. *Tōyō*; Kor. *Tong'yang*). For early European terms for the region, see Lach, 1965–77, I: 4, 40. For the East Asian acceptance of the European nomenclature, see Saaler and Szpilman, 2011.

<sup>41</sup> There is a significant body of research on the racial construction of East Asians and racism directed against them. This scholarship, however, tends to be compartmentalized into the treatment of specific groups in specific periods. Among the topics that have gained relatively substantial attention are Western racism against immigrants and people of East Asian ancestry in North America (e.g., Aarim-Heriot, 2003; Hirobe, 2001; Leonard, 2006; Rustomji-Kerns, 1999), racial attitudes towards Japan from 1895 to 1945 (e.g., Iikura, 2004; Horne, 2004), and, to a lesser extent, the earlier construction of East Asians in the West, and the Japanese (e.g., Henning, 2000; Askew, 2004; Kowner, 2000, 2004a; Leupp, 2003; Maltarich, 2005; Weiner, 2004) and Chinese (e.g., Demel, 1992a; Blue, 1999; Zhang, 2009) in particular. Keevak (2011) offers an overview of the racial construction of the entire region, but was still in press during the writing of this volume. There is also a significant body of research on racial attitudes among East Asians, but, again, most of it concerns Japan (e.g., Kitahara, 1989, 2007; Kondo, 1997; Koshiro, 2003; Morris-Suzuki, 1998, 2000; Robertson, 2002; Utsumi, 2004; Weiner, 1994) and—to a lesser extent—also ethnic and racial attitudes in modern China (e.g., Dikötter, 1992, 1997; Johnson, 2007; Mullaney, 2011) and Korea (e.g., Shin, 2006).

incorporate research on East Asia, but the general “classical” Eurocentric bias has largely remained. An otherwise very well-written and penetrating recent textbook on racism published by Oxford University Press may serve as an example. Incredibly, the entire text devotes no more than 11 lines to China, three to Japan and none to Korea.<sup>42</sup> Another recent book published by Harvard University Press does not fare any better. Entitled *The Problem of Race in the Twenty-First Century*, it contains virtually no references to issues of race and racism in either of these nations.<sup>43</sup>

There is no justification for this oversight. As this volume attempts to demonstrate, East Asians have been at the core of modern racial constructions and explicit taxonomies since their inception in the eighteenth century, and even earlier. Westerners may have regarded the peoples of the region—mostly Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans—as being remote and at times somewhat irrelevant, but that did not save them from being the object of racial classification and the target of blatant racism. Still, at stake is not a question of victimhood. Our aim here is not to correct any historiographical imbalance. We would rather wish to examine the significance of East Asians in the context of race studies and thus broaden current views on the rise of modern racial thought and on the development of racism. Understanding the motives that shaped the place of East Asians in modern racial theories, taxonomies and hierarchies in particular and deciphering the mechanisms that have prompted local reactions to racism seems important enough to contribute to a broader analysis of the way in which these concepts have risen and functioned. Moreover, for the pivotal place of the region in modern history alone, we ought to contend that East Asians are also of special relevance to the study of modern racial theory, race relations, and racism. But these people also have several distinct if not peculiar features that single them out from most other groups in this context and so imbue the research concerning them with an even greater importance. Three features are particularly noteworthy:

*Equal standing.* Europeans considered East Asians (primarily Chinese and Japanese in this case) to be their equals in many respects throughout the early modern period and during much of the eighteenth century when the modern idea of race emerged. For this reason, East Asians stood at

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<sup>42</sup> Rattansi, 2007: 18, 170.

<sup>43</sup> Holt, 2002. In a passing comment on the emergence of racial taxonomies in the eighteenth century, the author notes: “Perhaps it is no accident either that this occurred as Europeans came into more intimate contact with the peoples of Africa and the Americas.” The European acquaintance with East Asia in this period and the intense writings on China in particular are once again completely ignored. See Holt, 2002: 33.

the apex of any ethnic hierarchy Europeans had constructed at this time.<sup>44</sup> Initially, the most capable observers and consequently the first producers of intercultural comparisons were members of the Society of Jesus. They not only benefitted from a rigorous education but also from an extensive body of reports from missionaries in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Like many of their contemporaries in Europe, Jesuit visitors to Asia perceived the cultural level and technological capacity of both the Chinese and Japanese to be at least as advanced, and occasionally even superior to the Europeans.<sup>45</sup> In the same fashion, they usually judged their military power and their capacity to project it efficiently as being far beyond what Europeans could muster in Asia and also regarded the physical features of these two peoples, notably their skin color, as not substantially different from their own.<sup>45</sup>

The high esteem for East Asia began before the onset of the Age of Discovery. Educated people in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Europe were acutely aware of the Mongol might after these invincible hordes had wreaked havoc in the eastern confines of the continent, leaving a legacy of awe throughout Eurasia. Highly conscious of this military capacity, visitors to central Asia and further east during the *Pax Mongolica*, such as Marco Polo and a few Franciscan friars, described the commercial development in Cathay and Manzi [China] with admiration and noted the immense wealth of Cipangu [Japan].<sup>46</sup> The high regard for the region's cultural attainment and the attraction to its commercial potential lingered and was reconfirmed throughout the Age of Discovery, even when the European powers began to subjugate and exploit an ever growing number of peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Asia. No wonder, then, that until the mid-eighteenth century both China and Japan remained a beacon of full sovereignty, economic self-sufficiency and military might, at least on a par with any European country. Despite some earlier signs, it was only a century later, as a matter of fact, that the status and prestige of these two empires began to disintegrate dramatically when both lost their tight control of the mode of contact with the West. At that juncture, China and Japan were forced to sign treaties granting the great powers extraterritorial courts in their lands, even though none of them was fully conquered or colonized by the Western powers.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> For the place of East Asians in the rudimentary racial hierarchies that appeared in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Kownner, 2013a.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Demel, 2001; Demel, 2002.

<sup>46</sup> Zorzi, 1985: 206–7, 232–4, 243.

<sup>47</sup> Japan, however, was the first non-Western nation to sign equal treaties with the Western Powers (1894–97), which meant ending extraterritorial jurisdiction within forty years of



In this sense, and except for a very short period of several decades, the entire region did not follow any of the known patterns of submission and inferiority that the Europeans had established with large segments of humanity in the latter half of the second millennium, and since the late nineteenth century in particular. Even Korea—a symbol of East Asian weakness and decay at the end of the period—did not fall into Western hands but rather moved from submission to one local power to submission to another. This East Asian standing demonstrates that racist theories were not only the outcome of conquest, colonization, and exploitation (of which slavery is the most extreme form) of the Other, but also the outcome of contacts with civilizations considered equal and in certain respects even superior. Moreover, the placement of East Asians in any implicit racial hierarchy and explicit taxonomy Europeans had constructed since the sixteenth century displays a need to use the entire gamut of abilities and traits, of both “inferior” and “superior” Others, rather than Europeans on the one hand and all “Others” on the other hand. Taken to an extreme, one may argue that no racial theory was possible had East Asians been excluded.

*Adoption of the Western Racial Worldview.* Another distinctive and initially even unique feature of East Asia was its willing and rapid adoption of the racial idea, or at least certain tenets of it, and its subsequent emulation of common Western racial policies. Since the late nineteenth century, Japan, and to a lesser extent China, have used race in order to amalgamate a more cohesive society. There was nothing new about these goals except for the terminology. Since premodern times all the major kingdoms in the region were using various means for creating this cohesiveness, understanding, as Dru Gladney has suggested, that “the composition of the nation is not a natural process but is achieved, promoted, and represented through political and cultural means.”<sup>48</sup> In the face of multiple religions and cultural ambivalence, broad categories of race as used in the West since the eighteenth century appeared to surpass any other naturalized category in offering common definitions. Still, one of the main reasons why both China and Japan, but not Korea, were able to adopt the Western racial concept was their relatively intact sovereignty, at an era in which very few peoples outside Europe and the Americas could

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the time the unequal treaties had been signed. The abolition of extraterritoriality in China took longer and was only finalized between 1943 and 1947. For the rise and decline of extraterritoriality in Japan and China, see Kayaoglu, 2010: 67, 151, respectively.

<sup>48</sup> Gladney, 1998: 6.



enjoy it. Additionally, these two East Asian nations had a long heritage of self-centeredness and collective self-esteem that facilitated the relatively smooth adoption of Western knowledge and theories without the initial fear that they would harm the proto-national consciousness and pride.<sup>49</sup>

*Racial Backlash.* East Asia was the only region in modern times that had developed coherent theories and explicit policies that sought to actively undermine the Western racial worldview. This capacity was the result, among other things, of maintaining national sovereignty, promoting a long-standing sense of ethnic and cultural pride, as well as upholding a fairly high rate literacy and civil conformity. It took exactly 22 years from the time Japan was forced to open its ports to Western shipping in a humiliating act of American gun diplomacy until it repeated the same feat against Korea. Employing its newly formed and modern navy for this purpose, Japan was the only Asian or African power that could or wished to reproduce such an undertaking in 1876. Western observers, and race theorists in particular, were reluctant to recognize this demonstration of power as a significant challenge. Nothing yet could stir them from the conviction that their hegemony had been the outcome of primordial and immutable 'racial' characteristics. Nonetheless, Japan's growing ability to emulate the West in military terms was the end product of an acute understanding that the latter's advantage was predominantly economic and technological. This upper hand was merely a temporary consequence of a global mercantile network European maritime powers had developed progressively since the fifteenth century and the production capacity a number of Western nations obtained during the so-called Industrial Revolution. By the nineteenth century it was machine-based manufacturing and the introduction of steam power that enabled the West to gain an unprecedented military superiority that could be utilized even against East Asians.

It is true that the Industrial Revolution first materialized in Western Europe and until the 1860s was virtually a unique European and North American phenomenon. But it was not to remain so for long. By the early twentieth century, Japan emerged as the first non-European nation to master many of the aspects of modern technology and military technology in particular, whereas in the beginning of the twenty-first century China regained its place as the world's leading manufacturer and largest

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<sup>49</sup> For the operation of a similar mechanism in the extensive borrowing of English vocabulary in modern Japan, see Kowner and Bul, 2008.

exporter of goods.<sup>50</sup> Japan's attainment brought it honor and respect, but did little, at least initially, to alter the racial position of East Asians as a whole in the Western mind.<sup>51</sup> Race and racial hierarchies were ultimately not a mirror of power and technology alone, and even in this respect the region witnessed considerable variation. The Boxer Rebellion—China's first substantial attempt to shake off colonial encroachment and free itself from detested concessions to foreign powers since the First Opium War (1839–42)—failed altogether. Japan, however, was far more organized and militarily competent by then and so was a challenge to the West. Its victory over Russia in 1905 was a rare example of a non-European power defeating a modern European power. As the first full-scale war between an East Asian nation and a European foe, its “racial” consequences were not only obvious to Western observers. In the years that followed its triumph, Japan witnessed the emergence of a discourse known as *jinshuron* [theories of race *or* debate on race], which questioned the necessity of emulating the West.<sup>52</sup> Chinese observers were similarly enchanted by Japan's victory, and although they became split with regard to the future prospects of cooperating with it, their racial awareness and national confidence as Asians grew markedly.<sup>53</sup> Sun Yat-sen, for example, felt that the Russian defeat was first and foremost a triumph for all Asian people, and the victims of European imperialism in particular. Visiting London at the time of the Japanese decisive victory at the Battle of Tsushima, Sun could not but notice that even the Britons, Japan's allies, were dismayed by this naval achievement. Musing about this observation, the father of the Republic of China concluded in retrospect, some twenty years later: “Blood is thicker than water.”<sup>54</sup>

Nine years later, when Britain asked Japan to fulfill its role in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and wage war against German forces stationed in China, the Japanese oligarchy was hesitant. Once the war in Europe was over and order restored, Japan's leading elder statesman Yamagata Aritomo predicted: “The rivalry between the white and colored peoples will intensify, and perhaps it will be a time when the white races will all unite to oppose the

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Demel, 2010a: 280–284.

<sup>51</sup> For a succinct overview of Japan's drive to great-power status, see Iriye, 1989.

<sup>52</sup> Shimazu, 1998: 95–97, 110–112; Kowner, 2007a: 35–39. Still, many Japanese tended to interpret the war as a clash between two nations, one apparently more civilized than the other, rather than as a clash of two races.

<sup>53</sup> See Schiffrin, 2007.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Schiffrin, 2007: 173.

colored peoples.”<sup>55</sup> Among the alternatives it examined was collaborating with China against all the colonial forces of the “white man.” In the wake of three weeks of tensed wavering, however, the oligarchy chose to join Great Britain, sensing it was too early to turn against the West.<sup>56</sup> By the time of the League of Nations was inaugurated in 1919, Japan’s statesmen felt more confident about their international position and regarded their nation as the champion of the colored peoples’ cause.<sup>57</sup> Still, the ultimate break with the West only occurred at the outbreak of the Pacific War (1941–45), more than two decades later. During the war, Japan adopted racist measures and policies against Westerners. These were without parallel, since no other group had turned some of the tenets of the racial worldview and policies it adopted towards the West or towards Westerners—the originators of these very same views and policies.<sup>58</sup>

*The Emergence of Race Theories in East Asia: Origins and Causality*

This volume is about mutual relations—the transfers of ideas and the spread of influences from one place to another and vice versa. It does not necessarily imply a true reciprocity, but as a whole each of the essays here demonstrates how racial ideologies and racism have infiltrated any group they had come in contact with. Evidently, the modern theory of race did not originate in East Asia. As many studies have carefully documented (see Ch. 2 to 4 in this volume), it was formulated in Western Europe and had long characterized the thought and behavior of this specific region and its colonial offshoots. It was the outcome of long-lasting efforts, the joint product of numerous thinkers in several countries throughout some three centuries of observations, data accumulation and intellectual evolution. There are various explanations for the specific emergence of the idea of race in Europe, but if a single trigger has to be selected it is probably the unprecedentedly intensive ethnic encounters Europeans had experienced in their overseas expansion during the Age of Discovery. What began as naval explorations brought European mariners and traders into contact with countless new groups of great cultural, social and technological variation. These encounters dramatically expanded the limited

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<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Hackett, 1971: 270.

<sup>56</sup> Kato, 2007.

<sup>57</sup> Shimazu, 1998: 13–37.

<sup>58</sup> For a succinct review of Japan’s ‘revolt,’ see Najita and Harootunian, 1988.

ethnographic knowledge that characterized the European Middle Ages as well as contributed to the development of a continental identity and a sense of uniqueness.<sup>59</sup>

The early modern European encounter with the Other had a special character. From the start, it was not a neutral chance meeting but an active pursuit of profit, power, and knowledge, which affected the way in which Europeans viewed and treated the Other. Side by side, the Age of Discovery and later the Enlightenment also promoted intellectual curiosity that in turn fed further interest. This was particularly evident in science, natural history and ethnography, all increasingly liberated from the limits of religious thought and biblical worldviews. Inevitably, the flow of new information and the expanding geographical horizons required a better and more systematic arrangement of knowledge. The state of botany may serve as an illustration of this need. Between 1550 to 1700, the number of plants known to Europeans had quadrupled, and during the sixteenth century alone Europe benefited from the introduction of more plants than in the previous two millennia.<sup>60</sup> Two centuries later, biological knowledge virtually exploded, as can be seen in the work of the great Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (Carl von Linné, 1707–1778). Beginning with 14 folio pages in 1735 and reaching some 2,300 pages in three volumes 35 years later, each of the twelve “official” editions of Linnaeus’ *magnum opus*, the taxonomic compendium *Systema naturae*, considerably surpassed its antecedents in size and depth. Linnaeus himself was keenly aware that the number of newly discovered species was so overwhelming that no single scholar could keep up with the task of cataloguing them. No wonder, then, that the taxonomic endeavor in botany became a collective enterprise outclassing zoology in research and methodological innovation and becoming a model for other fields. Regarding botany as part of a larger natural world, Linnaeus also encapsulated the animal kingdom in his enterprise, one in which mankind stood at the apex.<sup>61</sup>

Although the buds of the intellectual revolution that had swept Europe reached other continents, early modern East Asia did not witness a similar

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<sup>59</sup> A growing number of relevant books on the rise of the idea of Europeanness and whiteness in this period have recently been published. See, for example, Pagden, 2002; Taylor, 2005; Painter, 2010.

<sup>60</sup> For the explosion of new species of plants and the quest for a fitting botanical taxonomy, see Ogilvie, 2006: 49–53; Morton, 1981: 118–119, 145.

<sup>61</sup> There is a vast literature on Linnaeus’ taxonomic enterprise and its impact. See, for example, Morris and Berwick, 2008; Broberg, 2006; Blunt, 2001; Farber, 2000.

development.<sup>62</sup> This, as well as an absence of prolonged overseas experience may explain, in part, why the idea of race, at least in its modern guise, did not originate in this region. While historically China expanded in all geographical directions, and in the early fifteenth century even witnessed a brief period of long-distance naval explorations, the regional trade networks did not expand beyond the ports of Southeast Asia in the course of subsequent centuries. The nature of these contacts was commercial and relatively static. There was very little adventuring in late-Ming and Qing policies, nor exceptional curiosity, and, if any, they were often characterized by conservatism and restrictiveness.<sup>63</sup> Until the mid-sixteenth century, for example, Ming authorities had prevented mariners from travelling to certain countries and from landing in local ports, whereas in the mid-seventeenth century Japanese shipping witnessed a sharp decline due to internal restrictions.

All in all, the fact that East Asians had no clear concept of race does not necessarily mean that they could not construct it or that they possessed no rudimentary ideas of stock, blood and purity. It is certain, however, that they lacked many of the preconditions and prerequisites that shaped European thought throughout the critical centuries before and during the emergence of a full-blown idea of race. For much of this time and even slightly later, East Asians remained confined to their own region, and despite the prevalence of technical resourcefulness and even occasional attempts at scientific transformation, stayed bound to rigid traditions reinforced by politically cautious and conservative regimes. A number of scholars have argued that racism is a European phenomenon because of its association with colonialism and modernity, both a product of this very continent.<sup>64</sup> In fact, East Asia may help us qualify this conviction. Both China and Japan displayed a certain form of colonialism, at least in their periphery, long before the Age of Discovery, but this did not lead to explicit racism in its European form. Our broad definition of this concept, however, does not preclude East Asians from promoting racist views even before the advent of European race theories and the subsequent strain of "scientific racism." History shows they occasionally did. All the three great cultures of East Asia, without exception, displayed a strong sense of ethnocentrism

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<sup>62</sup> For the reverberations of this scientific and intellectual revolution in early modern East Asia, see, for example, Bowers, 1970; Vande Walle and Kasaya, 2001; Elman, 2006: 15–130; Hsia, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> This does not mean that the Qing authorities did not venture into minor reforms or curtailed scientific innovation. Cf. Waley-Cohen, 1993.

<sup>64</sup> E.g., Anderson, 1983: 149–151.

and often also an acute xenophobia—both seemingly requisites of modern racism. While local racism was not based on sound theoretical foundations, it was characterized by ethnocentrism and—more often—by an extreme form of xenophobia.

In China, for example, Han scholars had been aware of ethnic differences between themselves and the barbarian Other long before the arrival of Europeans. But, as Don J. Wyatt and Frank Dikötter show in this volume, they often interchanged “culture” and “race” and were inclined towards culturalist interpretations of human differences.<sup>65</sup> Ethnocentrism in Ming and Qing China was rife and European visitors to the empire often reported being treated with contempt by the locals as if they were barbarians.<sup>66</sup> Early modern Korea experienced fewer contacts with foreigners than its neighbors and during the seventeenth century had very meager intercourse with Europeans. Still, the only extended experience with a European, the Dutchman Hendrick Hamel (1630–1692), suggests the existence of a strong xenophobia throughout this relatively secluded kingdom. A bookkeeper at the Dutch East India Company (VOC), Hamel was shipwrecked off the southern coast of Korea on his way to Japan, and was kept captive in the capital Seoul from 1653 to 1666. As a captive in this country for 13 years, his account points towards very little cultural openness and curiosity on his hosts’ part, certainly less than that of contemporary China.<sup>67</sup>

It was Japan, however, that implemented the most extreme form of rudimentary racist policies among the three major kingdoms of early modern East Asia. In 1636, for example, the shogunate [*bakufu*] issued a decree ordering the expulsion of all remaining Portuguese, their local progeny and their Japanese mothers.<sup>68</sup> While the fundamental motive behind the decree and the concomitant seclusion policy was political, its racial tinge was far from obscure.<sup>69</sup> In probably the first instance of early modern conviction for human telegony (a theory that assumes the influence of a previous sire or mere sexual intercourse in the progeny of a subsequent sire from the same mother), the decree also called for the eviction of local women who had cohabited with Portuguese men and then married

<sup>65</sup> Also see Dikötter, 1992: 1–30; Abramson, 2008: 83–107.

<sup>66</sup> For a general overview of the Chinese attitude towards foreigners during this and other periods, see Bauer, 1980.

<sup>67</sup> For Hamel’s experience and account, see Ledyard, 1971: 17–119; Hove, 1989; Lach and Van Kley, 1993: 486–488, 1786–1797.

<sup>68</sup> Matsui, 2009: 39–40.

<sup>69</sup> For a general review of the shogunal policy towards foreigners and the resulting strategy of ‘seclusion’, see Toby, 1984.

Japanese men.<sup>70</sup> Some of those women, wrote an astonished Dutch observer, had borne their Japanese husbands “five, six or even more children, and now had to separate from their children and husbands. Among them were also Japanese who were exiled because they had adopted and brought up children of mixed blood.”<sup>71</sup> Three years later, another shogunal decree banned all intercourse between foreigners, regardless of their origin, and local women other than prostitutes. This policy is often considered xenophobic, but the expulsion of the offspring of mixed ancestry and the Japanese who had had intimate relations with foreigners several years earlier seems plainly racist. It should not be surprising, perhaps, that a somewhat similar attitude and subsequent policy would reemerge in the same country soon after the Pacific War, when intimate relations between American GIs and local women were quite common. Although concern for the relatively few children of unions with black soldiers was greater, eventually hundreds of children, the abandoned offspring of Japanese mothers and American GI fathers of whatever “race”, were sent for adoption in the United States.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, postwar Japan did not condone, at least until recently, the intimate relations between its women and non-combatants, especially when those men were of African or Asian origin.<sup>73</sup>

In the same vein, East Asians had clear ideas of ethnic center and periphery and an unambiguous view of human hierarchy, to which the shared legacy of Confucianism and its inherent emphasis on order and hierarchy seemingly contributed.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, East Asians also had a well-defined preference for light skin color—particularly among women. In China, as Don J. Wyatt demonstrates in this volume, it emerged long before the encounter with Europeans. Earlier studies have shown that a similar outlook was prevalent in other parts of the region.<sup>75</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>70</sup> For this late nineteenth century scientific theory, see Burkhardt, 1979: 1–21.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Matsui, 2009: 28.

<sup>72</sup> For the postwar controversy concerning mixed-race orphans in Japan and the partial failure of the plan for dispatching them for adoption in the United States, see Koshiro: 1999: 159–200. For the greater concern regarding half-black children, see *idem*, 176–177.

<sup>73</sup> For Japanese attitudes towards intimate relations between American military personnel and local women during the Occupation era (1945–52), see Dower, 1999: 123–139. For the disparagement of Dewi Sukarno (née Nemoto Naoko) in the Japanese media for her marriage to the Indonesian leader Sukarno, see Miyake, 2006: 166–167. For a similar controversy in postwar (South) Korea, see Moon, 1997. However, it should be noted that both present-day Japan and present-day Korea, as Gi-Wook Shin shows in this volume, are much more tolerant about such unions than several decades ago.

<sup>74</sup> E.g., Nakai, 1980.

<sup>75</sup> E.g., Wagatsuma, 1967; Hulse, 1968.



the use of skin color for status and ethnic distinction was common in premodern times.<sup>76</sup> Some may consider the preference for light or lighter than average skin color an aspect of Western racism, but it has ancient roots in many cultures, many with little contact with the West.<sup>77</sup> There is plenty of evidence, as a matter of fact, showing that attitudes towards light and dark colors in general and light and dark skin colors in particular have old traditions in all human societies. Even young children and homogenous groups hardly exposed to external influences exhibit this preference.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, among native Africans, positive values such as wisdom, purity and luck have been traditionally associated with lighter hues and negative ones such as evil and death with black ones.<sup>79</sup> Within Japanese society too, negative attitudes towards dark skin were common well before the first encounter with Black people.<sup>80</sup>

There are several reasons for this common preference among premodern societies. A number of scholars have hypothesized that a lighter skin color was associated in the early stages of human evolution with greater fecundity and as a neotenous trait due to females' tendency to lighten during puberty.<sup>81</sup> Others noted that men across cultures are attracted to women with such cues.<sup>82</sup> This presumed attraction, together with the observation that women tend to be lighter than the males of the same group, led Pierre L. van den Berghe and Peter Frost to conclude that the preference for light skin color "links a genetically-based phenotype with a cultural preference, via sexual selection."<sup>83</sup> If this is the case, it has likely led to a preferential mating pattern between fair women and high status men once the

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<sup>76</sup> For the link between skin color and status, see Kowner, 1996. For medieval views of dark-skinned people in the Islamic world, see Lewis, 1971: 55–56. For similar views among the Jews living in the cultural worlds of either Islam or Christianity, see Melamed, 2003: 122–195.

<sup>77</sup> In a study examining the available records from 51 societies, Pierre Van den Berghe and Peter Frost (1986) found that 47 of them showed a clear preference for "the lighter end of the locally represented spectrum, though not necessarily for the lightest possible skin color" (p. 92). In fact, even the remaining four societies showed no unequivocal preference for darker colors.

<sup>78</sup> Cross and Cross, 1971; Iwawaki, Sonoo, Williams, and Best, 1978; Richardson and Green, 1971.

<sup>79</sup> For general attitudes towards fair skin, see Gergen, 1967.

<sup>80</sup> Wagatsuma, 1967; Russell, 1991.

<sup>81</sup> It is a neotenous trait due to the tendency of the infant skin to be lighter than that of their older siblings. E.g., Van den Berghe and Frost, 1986.

<sup>82</sup> For this hypothesis, see Symons, 1979.

<sup>83</sup> Van den Berghe and Frost, 1986: 100.



cultural preference for light skin in women had been established.<sup>84</sup> Conversely, the negative association of dark skin with low status could have gradually been enhanced by a greater exposure to the sun of people in low status occupations, including peasants. Likewise, it is hard to ignore the accumulated effect of widespread oral and written traditions in East Asia and elsewhere that since pre-historical times have associated light skin with positive virtues and dark skin with negative ones.<sup>85</sup>

And yet, having a preference for lighter skin and nurturing hierarchical and xenophobic views did not lead East Asians to construct taxonomies of mankind or theories suggesting that human differences are immutable. Before the late nineteenth century, in fact, they had a very limited sense of racial identity. In China, for instance, only several decades earlier, the criterion for being “Han Chinese” had still been based on practice and lacked any biological essence. To be Chinese in this period, James L. Watson suggests,

was to understand and accept the view that there was a correct way to perform key rituals associated with [the] life cycle... Correct performance of these rites was one clear and unambiguous method of distinguishing the civilized from the uncivilized, or, when considering marginal peoples, the cooked from the uncooked. Put in another way, practice rather than belief was what made one Chinese.<sup>86</sup>

While the issue of the existence of premodern ethnic and—needless to say—racial identity in East Asia requires further research, it is beyond doubt that the region did not develop any systematic outlook on race before the late nineteenth century. It was only a few decades earlier, actually, that the region had confronted, as Sufen Lai shows in this volume, European racial theory and racism for the first time. By then, China was

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<sup>84</sup> Hulse's (1967) finding of lighter skin color among the children of the higher social classes in Japan seems to verify this assumption.

<sup>85</sup> E.g., Williams, 1966; Dikötter, 1992: 17. Viewing skin color as a manifestation of status, the attraction for darker (tanned) skin in the West in the latter half of the twentieth century does not contradict the previous findings but rather lends support to our contention that status plays a greater role than actual skin color in the determination of skin color preference. Once darker skin became firmly associated with leisure rather than with agricultural labor (while light skin became associated with factory work rather than with a noble choice), a somewhat modified preference could gain favor. However, it is the seasonal tanning, not the congenital darkness, that is associated with leisure, and a fine distinction has been made between the two. While this preference might have led to a wider attitude change towards dark skin in the long run, the recent association between tanning and a higher risk of skin cancer suggests it will remain a mere short-lived fad. Cf. Leary and Jones, 1993.

<sup>86</sup> Watson, 1993: 83.

defeated in a series of coastal clashes with British naval units, known as the First Opium War, while Japan was forced to cease its virtual seclusion in the wake of American pressure and subsequent diplomatic agreements with additional powers (1854–58). Still, it was neither the timing of the encounter nor its intensity, but the form of the reaction to it that made it so significant. Race, as the philosopher David Theo Goldberg has noted, is “one of the central conceptions of modernity,”<sup>87</sup> but was it necessarily confined to Western modernity?

*The Spectrum of Reactions to Western Racial Thought*

The racial theories that have evolved since the eighteenth century, first in Europe and then in North America, have been relevant to East Asians in several ways. First and foremost, they integrated the peoples of the region into a broad taxonomic system that often comprised the entire “great chain of being” [Lat. *scala naturae*] and, at any rate, all humanity. Secondly, they invariably referred to the entire East Asian population as members of a single and distinct branch (“variety” or “race”) of mankind, which hereafter could be identified by distinct and immutable physical and mental characteristics. Thirdly, they placed East Asians within a human hierarchy that suggested they were inferior to Europeans (the “white” or “Caucasian” race). And fourthly, they promoted a blatant racist outlook vis-à-vis East Asians that referred to them as different from and inferior to Westerners—not only as a group but also as individuals.

In the nineteenth century, this racist outlook began to spread out and it has lingered ever since. Initially, it circulated the periphery of Europe, as Susanna Soojung Lim and Alexander Bukh reveal in this volume for Russia. Inevitably, it did not take long until it reached East Asia too, as can be seen in Huajeong Seok’s study of European travel literature about Korea. This outlook also affected popular attitudes towards East Asian immigrants in the West, as Lenore Metrick-Chen shows in the case of Chinese immigrants to the United States, and even permeated through children’s literature, as shown graphically in Idesbald Goddeeris’ study of the construction of Chinese characters in Belgian comics in the twentieth century. Moreover, Western racism against East Asians often converged

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<sup>87</sup> Goldberg, 1993: 3.

with cultural views and geopolitical aspirations in the region, as T.G. Otte and Philip Towle demonstrate in the case of *fin-de-siècle* Britain.

Confronted with Western racial theories, East Asians, like many other non-Europeans in modern times, had several possible ways of reacting. In theory, they could ignore them *en bloc* or in part, reject them, accept them, or react against them. In reality, their approach was a mixed bag of reactions that differed considerably over time and across nations, educational levels, and social classes, but eventually comprised all of the above. Deliberate disregard or lack of interest are perhaps the most elementary reactions to external views of the self, and, indeed, they were often the first choice in East Asia. During the first several decades of exposure to Western racial thought, they mostly characterized the Chinese and Korean reactions, and to a lesser extent and for a much shorter time also the Japanese response. The fact that disregard was not universal within the region even at this early stage, suggests that in certain circumstances groups and individuals may react differently to perceived threats. Likewise, it seems obvious that certain groups and individuals are more susceptible to racial theories and racist disparagement than others or at least tend to react in a different pattern.<sup>88</sup>

It would be reasonable to assume that people regard an external outlook or knowledge as appealing and even adopt it only when it seems to bring certain benefits or when remaining indifferent to it may be detrimental. Certain cultural inclinations may reinforce or restrain this universal response. While all civilizations tend to follow the dictum of 'us' versus 'them,' the magnitude of their response to external pressures may differ substantially. Distinct intra- and extra-civilizational behavior may stem, Samuel Huntington has argued, from feelings of superiority or inferiority towards people considered to be very different: fear and lack of trust in those people, a difficulty to communicate with them, and a lack of familiarity with their assumptions, motivations and social relationships.<sup>89</sup> Hence, a greater susceptibility to foreign theories of human differences may occur when these barriers decrease, together with a familiarity with similar ideologies in the past and presumed benefits those who adopt it may gain in the future. Sufen Lai, for example, suggests in this volume that the existence of an earlier ethnic worldview in China facilitated the adoption of Western racial views, alongside traditional views of the universe.

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<sup>88</sup> For a classical survey of the spectrum of individual and group reactions to prejudice and racism ("victimization"), see Allport, 1958: 138–158.

<sup>89</sup> Huntington, 1996: 129.

One such view classifies human beings according to their moral characters and social activities into fixed categories.

No trait of the Other is probably more outstanding and often more attractive than power. In that respect, the success of the West in promulgating self-serving theories of race in East Asia, we suggest, is partly linked to its military and technological superiority during this period. At times it could be sheer admiration and a desire for similar success and at times nothing but fear, but on the face of it race theories had an exceptional appeal because they represented a powerful entity. This power facilitated the adoption of a sweeping worldview. It is no wonder, then, that the tendency to adopt them grew stronger once the process of modernization expanded and many other western theories, ideologies, doctrines, and philosophies were largely embraced. Race was actually never the first concept East Asians adopted. Without exception, East Asians initially focused on the acquisition of knowledge and ideas that bolstered their security and boosted their well-being. They tended to adopt the idea of race after they developed a national awareness and once they realized it was instrumental in the construction of national identities.<sup>90</sup>

The initial adoption of a Western racial outlook and bodily ideal in East Asia primarily took place on an individual level. It was often the result of an active and conscious pursuit and characterized intellectuals and people who travelled overseas, as Ayu Majima makes plain in this volume. Today, in contrast, a similar exposure requires much less effort and thus tends to afflict young adults and people attracted to Western culture.<sup>91</sup> In this sense, East Asia does not greatly differ from other parts of the world where a colonial legacy is still eminent. This is mostly visible in the domain of physical appearance. For decades, people of Third World states, cultural critic Ella Shohat argues, have absorbed “a canonical notion of beauty within which White women (and secondarily White men) were the only legitimate objects of desire.” The rising Third World media seem to follow suit even now, whether through the promotion of colonial beauty stereotypes or merely by their association with glamour and high status. This may explain why many years after the demise of colonialism,

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. Dikötter, 1997: 11. For the modern role of race in the formation of personal and collective identities, see Smedley, 1998.

<sup>91</sup> For contemporary manifestations of the individual adoption of lingering Western racial ideas and ideals that lead, among other factors, to relatively low self-esteem and body image alongside a high prevalence of eating disorders, see Lee and Lee, 2000; Yang, Gray, and Pope, 2005 for China and Taiwan; Engstrom, 1995, 1997; Kelsky, 2001; Kowner, 2002a, 2004b for Japan; Jung and Lee, 2006 for Korea; and Kawamura, 2002 for Asian Americans.

"...*morena* women in Puerto Rico, like Arab-Jewish (Sephardi) women in Israel, dye their hair blonde, why Brazilian TV commercials are more suggestive of Scandinavia than of a Black-majority country, why Miss Universe contests can elect blonde 'queens' even in North African countries, and why [East] Asian women perform cosmetic surgery in order to appear more Western."<sup>92</sup>

Individual choice may turn into group preference, and vice versa. Among late-nineteenth-century East Asian nations, Japan was exceptionally prominent in its collective readiness to adopt and emulate Western racial theories. It was not the first encounter Japan had with the West, but its re-encounter in the 1850s was sudden and coercive. This background makes its particularly intriguing. After more than two centuries of strictly limiting contacts with European civilization, Japan successfully adopted now many of its facets, particularly technology and political institutions. In a period of unprecedented Western hegemony, Japan's emulation of the West made it a leading non-Western competitor and even a threat—first as an expansionist military power and then as an economic superpower. Japanese adoption of racial thought was part of a broader process of adoption and cultural transformation. In the first three decades that followed the Meiji Restoration, Japan considered Western civilization as its primary model of state and culture, a role which China had played since the seventh century. In order to emulate Western technology and culture, Japan sent sizeable delegations and a large number of individuals to observe the model first hand while thousands of Western specialists were paid high salaries to come to Japan and share their knowledge.<sup>93</sup> The key word in this process was civilization and enlightenment [Jpn. *bunmei kaika*], which became a synonym for the West. The Japanese elite was often highly sensitive to the criticism foreign visitors expressed about the country and the people, but its aspiration to satisfy the Westerners stemmed from a general acceptance of the Western idea of civilization.<sup>94</sup> The realization of this concept, many of them believed, had numerous advantages such

<sup>92</sup> Shohat and Stam, 1995: 322.

<sup>93</sup> All in all, the Japanese government hired some 2,400 Westerners [Jpn. *oyatoi gai-kokujin*] between 1868–1900. The best account of those employees and their impact on Japan is still Jones, 1980.

<sup>94</sup> Quite a few Western visitors to Meiji-era Japan noted the attention they received from the Japanese alongside their sensitivity to their comments, and criticism in particular. See, for example, the British Major Henri Knollys' (1887: 255) observation: "...unless I reply in a eulogistic tone to all their queries, the sensitive little people grow extremely touchy and even resentful." For the Japanese late-nineteenth-century acceptance of the idea of civilization, see Gong, 1984: 164–187.

as maintaining the social order, emulating advanced technology, and ultimately enabling the survival of Japan.

Their contemporaries in China, in contrast, still believed in the cultural superiority of their empire over the West and remained initially less concerned with such views. Even after the First Opium War, when Chinese intellectuals began to recognize the need for reforms, their concerns were directed mainly towards self-strengthening and warding off Western aggression. They accepted as necessary a selective adoption of Western science and technology, but they also maintained the conviction that Chinese ethics and Confucian teachings were the essential foundations whereas Western methods were merely supplements. Hence, the Western conception of civilization began to gain momentum in local discourse only around the turn of the century.<sup>95</sup> Ironically, accepting the idea of civilization went hand in hand with the Western racial worldview, and, in turn, both promoted extensive adoption in other domains too.

In Japan, for example, attitudes toward the body underwent a far-reaching transformation, leading to the emergence of new ideals, which were often remote from the native corporal average and therefore the cause of much tension and frustration. The transformation of appearance began largely with external aspects, such as costume and hairstyle, but was far more intensive than any similar transformation elsewhere in the region.<sup>96</sup> It soon became an indication of one's social bearing. "If you tap a shaven and topknotted head," a late-nineteenth-century Japanese newspaper warned, "you will hear the sound of retrogression; if you tap an unshaven head you will hear the sound of Restoration; but if you tap a cropped head of hair you will hear the sound of culture and enlightenment."<sup>97</sup> The new Meiji oligarchy supported and promoted this transformation. Under its guidance, regional governments established the Misdemeanor Law [Jpn. *ishiki kai jōrei*] for regulating a variety of bodily practices, such as public nudity and mixed bathing, urinating in public and sumo wrestling between men and women. The enforcement of the law was swift and strict, at least in the capital and port cities.<sup>98</sup> The new ideals and standards spread fast. By the 1920s, anything Western in Japan "was considered 'modern' and, therefore,

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. Ishikawa, 1994.

<sup>96</sup> In late nineteenth-century China, only members of very limited social strata residing in the largest metropolitan areas displayed a visible, albeit partial, transformation of physical appearance. See, Zamperini, 2003.

<sup>97</sup> Cited in Yanagida, 1957: 28.

<sup>98</sup> For the large number of arrests in 1876 alone for misdemeanors involving breaches of the new laws in Tokyo, see Ogi, 1980: 98–101.

superior," and "the subtle, not fully conscious, trend toward an idealization of western physical features by the Japanese apparently became of increasing importance."<sup>99</sup>

This adoption afflicted the soul at least as much as the body. Its inevitable effect is patent when individuals internalize ideas that suggest the inferiority of their own group, and that was the essence of Western racial theories concerning East Asians. While the initial encounter with racial classification and hierarchy is characterized by a heightened consciousness, it is the subsequent adoption of views that belittle and mock oneself which is crucial. It is a painful but exclusively personal experience.<sup>100</sup> In the 1950s, the Martinique-born French-Algerian psychiatrist Frantz Fanon (1925–1961) elaborated on the state of mind of Black people in the postcolonial age. His book *Peau noire, masques blancs* [Black Skin, White Masks] (1952) remains a valid analysis of the feelings of dependency and helplessness they, and perhaps any people of non-European origin, may experience in a White world. "The black man wants to be white . . ." Fanon wrote, "black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect."<sup>101</sup>

For many of the last 150 years, East Asian intellectuals have lived in a White world without leaving their homes. Evidently, one need not be a colonial subject to experience the pain and inadequacy Fanon spoke about. Even beyond the physical rule of the West, many East Asians felt an urge if not compulsion to mimic Western ideals of whiteness side by side with Western dictates of civilization. On an individual level, this experience may be the result of the mere adoption of the tenets of racism, particularly when one is the object of them. This can be seen in an extreme form in the Jewish experience in modern Europe. The greater the desire to be integrated and accepted, the more acute the pain of racist disparagement.<sup>102</sup> Hence, the effect of colonialism can be spiritual even when no political control is exerted. Facing demonization in Weimar Germany, a decade before the Nazi rise to power, Albert Einstein referred at length to the mechanism of internalizing negative (racist) views and its impact on the self:

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<sup>99</sup> Wagatsuma, 1967: 416–417.

<sup>100</sup> For the circumstances that cause the rise of racial consciousness, see Banton, 1997: 88–106.

<sup>101</sup> Fanon, 1970: 9.

<sup>102</sup> For the impact of racial demonization on the self-perceptions and self-esteem of European Jews, and German Jews in particular, see Gilman, 1986, 1991a, 1991b; Efron, 1994.



As long as we lived in the Ghetto, belongingness to the Jewish people involved material difficulties and occasionally even physical danger, but not social and mental problems. With the emancipation this situation changed . . . In school and in university the young Jew is under the spell of a national society, which he respects very much, adores greatly, and receives his spiritual food. He feels he belongs to it and at the same time absorbs certain disparagement and realizes others are repulsed by him as if he was a stranger. . . .<sup>103</sup>

Six decades later Homi K. Bhabha would regard this sort of cultural adoption, or “mimicry,” as doomed to fail. “[C]olonial mimicry,” he suggests, “is the desire for reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite* . . . In order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.”<sup>104</sup> More than a few East Asians, immigrants in North America in particular but also members of the Japanese elite, could identify with Einstein’s observation and Bhabha’s postcolonial disenchantment.<sup>105</sup> As Ayu Majima illustrates in this volume, feelings of self-denial and inferiority kept characterizing Japanese intellectuals—not only during the early stages of modernization but also in the 1950s, and probably later as well. Feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt were occasionally relieved by aggression. This dual sentiment can be seen in the novelist Dazai Osamu’s (1909–1948) confession on the very day of the attack on Pearl Harbor. It penetrated his existence, he wrote down in his diary, like “a shaft of light.” Listening to the breaking news Dazai felt he became

a new man, as though a flower petal stirred in my breast, cooled by the sacred breath of a deity. . . . It is remarkable how hostile one can feel towards people whose eyes and hair are of different color. I want to beat them to death. This feels quite different from fighting against China. The very idea of those insensitive American savages treading on our beautiful Japanese soil is unbearable. . . . Oh, beautiful Japanese soldiers, please go ahead and smash them!<sup>106</sup>

It is doubtful whether this sort of latent aggression reinforced by personal pain was strong enough to serve as the trigger for a collective backlash. It was often reserved to diaries and disguised by veils of defiance. Still, the

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<sup>103</sup> This essay was originally written in April 1923. In Einstein, 1953: 123–124. For a similar observation, also see Sartre, 1960: 95.

<sup>104</sup> Bhabha, 1984: 126. For the impact of mimicry on the self in the postcolonial age, see also Cheng, 1997; Eng and Han, 2000.

<sup>105</sup> For the fractured identity of people of East Asian ancestry in contemporary North America, see King-O’Riain, 2006; Lee and Mac, 2008; Nemoto, 2009.

<sup>106</sup> Quoted in Buruma, 1996: 195–196.



backlash against the West and its aura of racial superiority was the final and most extreme reaction East Asia has witnessed. It is hardly surprising that Japan, the same nation that led the region's emulation of the West and promulgated some of its racial tenets throughout its ever-growing empire, was also the nation that ushered the regional backlash to the same phenomenon. The tenets of Social Darwinism were introduced at about the same period all over East Asia and evoked at least some interest among the local intelligentsia.<sup>107</sup> But again, nowhere was this theory of an ultimate life-and-death struggle between the races and nations more pervasive than in Japan. In the time of a rabid imperialist drive by the West (the so-called Age of Imperialism), the exposure to racial theories elsewhere was often the result of the fear of losing national sovereignty, if not physical extinction. This vicious circle, in Japan's case, was particularly evident in the final decade of the nineteenth century, a time during which it came under pressure to allow the cohabitation of Western residents with Japanese beyond the city ports (Jpn. *naichi zakkyo*; inland cohabitation). So affected were certain intellectuals by ideas of local inferiority that they feared such cohabitation might result in mixed marriages and ultimately lead to the extinction of the entire Japanese nation.<sup>108</sup>

Sensing the moment was fateful, some members of the Meiji oligarchy sought the advice of no other than Herbert Spencer himself. Surprisingly, this English philosopher and harbinger of Social Darwinism was cooperative. In response to a letter sent in August 1892 by Kaneko Kentarō, a graduate of Harvard College and at that time a lecturer at the Tokyo University, Spencer did not have any doubts concerning the required policy. He urged the Japanese to prohibit marriage with foreigners altogether—for biological reasons rather than social philosophy. Spencer was unambiguous about the disadvantages the Japanese may experience from such unions. "Mixing the constitutions of two widely divergent varieties which have severally become adapted to widely divergent modes of life," he explained, "you get a constitution which is adapted to the mode of life of neither—a constitution which will not work properly, because it is not fitted for any set of conditions whatever." The result, he emphasized, "is invariably a bad one in the long run," and suggested imperatively: "By

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<sup>107</sup> For the introduction of Social Darwinism to China, see Pusey, 1983; Bu, 2009. For its introduction to Korea, see Lee, 1978; Shin, 2006a: 29–30.

<sup>108</sup> Many of the materials relating to the internal debate on this issue can be found in Inō, 1992. Also see Pyle, 1969: 110–114.

all means, therefore, peremptorily interdict marriages of Japanese with foreigners.”<sup>109</sup>

At the same time, the entire region did not hesitate to adopt certain racial ideas that were less likely to harm the self. The easiest adoption of Western racial theory and prejudices was in reference to people who were remote, unknown or politically insignificant. No wonder, then, that some of the most racist views East Asians have constructed in modern times were of Africans and of Jews. These groups were so irrelevant to East Asians that Western views of them were almost completely adopted. While East Asians had virtually no legacy of acquaintance with European Jews, Africans were somewhat different. Although East Asians encountered a small number of Africans in early modern times, a negative outlook concerning dark skins had existed in the region long before the encounter with the West.<sup>110</sup> This unqualified borrowing demonstrates that racism does not require a genuine acquaintance or any significant contact with the Other. As long as it does not affect the self, racist views of the Other can be emulated in their entirety and sustained for long periods of time by groups and by individuals with diverse interests. In fact, actual encounters with the Other may attenuate prejudice, as with the Japanese and South Korean encounters with black GIs in 1945. Nonetheless, these encounters were often too limited and superficial, and thus many of the prejudices, as Christine Yano indicates in this volume, have lingered.<sup>111</sup> In a similar manner, Western racial views were occasionally emulated, at least in part, with regard to ethnic minorities within the national borders and with regard to indigenous groups overseas.<sup>112</sup> Curiously, Japanese policies towards the indigenous Ainu population in the late nineteenth century resembled contemporary policies towards Native Americans in the United States. Similarly, Japan began to adopt the format of ethnographic exhibitions common in the West at that time.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>109</sup> For excerpts from Spencer's letter to Kaneko, dated 26 August 1892, see Duncan, 1908: 16.

<sup>110</sup> For views of blackness and Africans in premodern China, see Dikötter, 1992, 10–13; Johnson, 2007: 13–23; for the same views in premodern Japan, see Russell, 1991.

<sup>111</sup> For modern and contemporary views of and attitudes towards African Americans and Black Africans in China, Japan, and Korea, see Johnson, 2007: 75–92; Yamashita, 2006; Koshiro, 2003; Russell, 1991, 1996; Thomas, 2006, respectively. For modern and contemporary views of and attitudes towards Jews in China and Japan, see Xun, 1997; Shillony, 1981: 156–171, 1992; Kowner, 1997; Goodman and Miyazawa, 2000.

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, Gladney, 1991, Mullaney, 2011 for attitudes towards minorities in China and Siddle, 1996 and Kowner, 1999 for attitudes towards ethnic minorities in Japan.

<sup>113</sup> E.g., Howell, 2004.

Japan is also a special case because it was the only modern non-Western nation that actively pursued large-scale colonial policies. Japanese colonialism can be seen as the epitome of the East Asian emulation of the Western racial outlook. It incorporated a highly hierarchical worldview and an ethnic order which separated the ruling Japanese from all others and discriminated between individuals on the basis of their ethnicity. But was it really the result of emulation, or did it merely represent local needs wrapped in a foreign ideology? Noam Chomsky, for example, believes that the full blame for Japan's imperialist aggression rests on the West, since it

was in no position to tolerate a situation in which India, Malaya, Indochina, and the Philippines erected tariff barriers favoring the mother country, and could not survive the deterioration in its very substantial trade with the United States and the sharp decline in China trade. It was, in fact, being suffocated by the American and British and other Western imperial systems, which quickly abandoned their lofty liberal rhetoric as soon as the shoe began to pinch.<sup>114</sup>

One may take issue with the historical facts in Chomsky's thesis but it is difficult to deny that many of the sources of and models for Japanese behavior and policies overseas up to 1945 (and later as well) came from the West. Furthermore, attitudes towards the local populations of the territories imperial Japan occupied and the scholarship (mainly the product of native anthropology) that dealt with them resembled earlier developments in the territories laboring under the Western colonial yoke.<sup>115</sup> As Hoi-eun Kim, Mariko Tamanoi and Yukiko Koshiro illustrate in this volume, they leave no doubt regarding the inherent and tight association between colonialism and racism.

The ultimate reaction was a racial backlash in both ideology and action. One form of backlash was the idea of Pan-Asianism. Together with geographical sameness, civilizational unity, historical interconnectedness, and common destiny, racial aspects, such as shared origin and kinship, were the common denominators of this ideology. Supporters of Pan-Asianism in East Asia welcomed it as a base for either regional or national (and seldom also continental) categories of distinction.<sup>116</sup> In *fin-de-siècle* Korea, scholars often referred to the idea of a struggle between the yellow race [Kor. *hwangsaek injong*] and the white race [*paeksaek injong*], and positioned

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<sup>114</sup> Chomsky, 1969: 191–192.

<sup>115</sup> This topic is too vast to be explored here. See, however, Gann, 1984.

<sup>116</sup> For the diverse assumptions of Pan-Asianists, those originating in East Asia in particular, see Saaler and Szpilman, 2011.

themselves among the members of the former, namely the Chinese and the Japanese.<sup>117</sup> Like Sun Yat-sen in China, Yun Chi-ho (1864–1945), a progressive leader of the Independence Club, seems to have been convinced that blood is thicker than water. “The meanest Japanese,” he noted in his diary in 1902,

would be a gentleman and scholar compared to a vodka-drunk, orthodox Russian. Between a Japanese and a Korean there is community of sentiment and of interest based on the identity of race, religion, and written characters. Japan, China, and Korea must have one common aim, one common policy, one common ideal—to keep the Far East the permanent home of the Yellow race, and to make that home as beautiful and as happy as nature has meant it to be.<sup>118</sup>

During the same year, at the very time the alliance with Britain was successfully concluded, not many in Japan believed in an East Asian racial brotherhood. Some certainly did, as recently-established Pan-Asian societies could testify, but the majority were of the opinion that rejecting any affinity with their relatively backward neighbors in China and Korea would help bolster their own racial status and Japan’s claim for regional greatness.<sup>119</sup> Still, the more the Japanese became disillusioned by the prospects of receiving such recognition, the more they were attracted to Pan-Asian [Jpn. *Ajia shugi*] views.<sup>120</sup> It was only in the 1930s that Japan moved dramatically in this direction and was willing to abandon its attraction to the West altogether. Until that time, however, the Japanese were unique in their tendency to relinquish their ‘Asian’ ties. Chinese and Korean intellectuals rarely considered an active association with the West. Among the less educated, but not only among them, the rise of a racial consciousness brought about a great deal of resentment against the West and its representatives in the region. Chinese riots against Western traders and missionaries in the last decade of the nineteenth century were a portent of the Boxer Rebellion and future regional backlashes elsewhere.<sup>121</sup> Nothing in the regional response, however, resembled the all out Japanese national turn against the West in the late

<sup>117</sup> Shin, 2006a: 30–39.

<sup>118</sup> Quoted in Shin, 2006a: 32.

<sup>119</sup> For the late-nineteenth-century rejection of racial affinity with Asia (“The Departure from Asia”) in Japan, see Pyle, 1969; Gluck, 1985; Tanaka, 1993. For the establishment of Pan-Asian societies in late nineteenth-century Japan, see Kuroki, 2007.

<sup>120</sup> For prewar Pan-Asianism in Japan, see parts I–III of Saaler and Koschmann, 2007.

<sup>121</sup> For the riots, cf. Welch, 2006.

1930s and particularly during the Pacific War (1941–45).<sup>122</sup> Postwar North Korea and post-1949 Communist China manifested a similar antagonism vis-à-vis the West, although, *prima facie*, it was primarily based on ideological rather than racial foundations.

The legacy of this racial backlash has not completely vanished. Although Japan and South Korea have been under an American military and cultural umbrella since 1945 and China had restored its diplomatic relations with the West in the early 1970s, anti-Western sentiments can still be detected in all three countries, and, it goes without saying, also in North Korea. The sense of being derided, exploited and discriminated against by the Western powers during the last 150 years or so has not vanished and attitudes towards Westerners, and even towards people of mixed origin remain somewhat hostile.<sup>123</sup> As in the past, national needs were able to rein it to political ends or keep it in check as necessary. In the late 1970s, China witnessed a resurgence of ethnic nationalism that also swept its neighbors in the following decade.<sup>124</sup> Japan and South Korea also witnessed a similar resurgence of cultural and ethnic nationalism, notably in the 1980s, that stemmed from various political, economic and cultural sources. While often disguised as anti-American, it is also characterized by racial resentment and hostility and supported by traditional xenophobia and ethnocentrism, as Gi-wook Shin shows in this volume in relation to contemporary South Korea.<sup>125</sup>

### *East Asia, Race and Racism: Regional vs. National Examination*

Currently encompassing several independent “nation states”, a number of major languages, and numerous minorities, East Asia has never been a homogenous region. How, then, should we examine this unit for our purposes? Should we examine it as a single unit or divide it into several “national” building blocks? Apart from general textbooks that allow for regional examination, few studies of modern East Asia truly avoid the customary division between the three great civilizations of the region (China, Japan, and Korea). They may do so when dealing with bilateral conflicts

<sup>122</sup> The best account of wartime racial ideology in Japan is Dower, 1986.

<sup>123</sup> E.g., Barmé, 1995; Lee, 2008.

<sup>124</sup> For the wave of ethnic nationalism in China and its effect on minorities, see Gladney, 1994a, 1994b; Kaup, 2002; Baranovitch, 2003.

<sup>125</sup> For ethnic and cultural nationalism in Postwar Japan, see Yoshino, 1992, 1997.

in the region (such as the two Sino-Japanese wars, or Japanese colonialism in Korea) or when exploring present-day regional relations. But otherwise they usually deal with each nation as an independent unit. In doing so, scholars risk overlooking some common processes and inevitably also insights relating to the cross-cultural experiences and legacies the entire region has shared. When dealing with racial designations that are supposed to encompass East Asians as a whole, the question of regional generalization is even more acute. That is, can we speak of East Asia as a single region without repeating earlier racial generalizations? More specifically, can we treat the Chinese, Japanese and Korean racial experiences as a shared legacy?

On the face of it, treating East Asia as a single unit seems justifiable, as we often do when examining the development of race in Western Europe and North America. After all, if we do so with regard to the West, why should we not do the same with regard to the East Asian response to the idea of race? In terms of the Western racial outlook, at least, one may have little misgivings. For some two centuries, Europeans and subsequently North Americans as well have tended to regard the Chinese, Japanese and Koreans as members of a single group, or race, which they referred to as '(East) Asians,' 'Mongols,' or simply the 'Yellow race.' They distinguished between the three peoples only when they wished to express a preference for one over the other or in times of conflict with one or the other, and showed little desire or ability to distinguish between individuals.<sup>126</sup> It should hardly be surprising, therefore, that East Asians too tend to refer to Westerners as members of a single group and often ignore their national and cultural diversity, and to say nothing of their individual differences.<sup>127</sup>

To the superficial eye, but also to the seasoned foreign traveler, the ethnographic generalizations Westerners made regarding East Asians were not necessarily far from the mark. To be sure, there were local

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<sup>126</sup> Curiously, there is nothing 'Western' or racist about this tendency, at least in principle. Research indicates that members of any group tend to see themselves (the 'ingroup') as positively heterogeneous and the Other (the 'outgroup') as relatively homogenous. It is nothing but a cognitive mechanism, the result of a familiarity and acquaintance with one's own group and the greater awareness of the differences between it and other groups. For the tendency to see the Other as homogenous, see Linville et al., 1986. For the cognitive background of the difficulty to recognize outgroup faces, see Meissner, Brigham, and Butz, 2005.

<sup>127</sup> For the tendency to regard the West as a monolith in the local debate concerning national identity [Jpn. *nikonjinron*] in contemporary Japan, see Dale, 1986: 38–53; Kowner, 2002b. The most comprehensive studies of this topic are Minami, 1994 and Befu, 2001.

idiosyncrasies one could hardly ignore, such as particular foods, specific manners, and distinct 'characters'; but, overall, the people of the entire region seem to share several important features. They live in a single geographical habitat with a roughly similar monsoonal climate; they consume the same staple food (mostly rice) which many eat with a bowl and chopsticks; they practice the same religion but not necessarily exclusively (Buddhism); they used to follow a single social and moral teaching (Confucianism); and, critically, they resemble each other in certain aspects of their physical appearance (facial form, hair color and form, and presumably skin color) and often claim to have descended from a single ancestor. Given these rough similarities observers and race theorists tended to view East Asians as a single unity (e.g., Christoph Meiners and Arthur de Gobineau), and this became an accepted norm in racial discourse since the late eighteenth century. The Chinese and Japanese were considered to be so physically similar, as a matter of fact, that during World War II, the United States Army issued its combatants with a booklet explaining the minute differences in appearance, gestures, and behavior between the two peoples.<sup>128</sup>

Apart from these images, East Asians have also shared considerable legacies in modern times. They had all faced Western expansion and Western racial theories at about the same time and had to respond to them using a similar arsenal of knowledge and technology. In addition, they experienced intensive mutual influence since the mid-nineteenth century, especially when, during the last decade of that century, the entire region began to view Japan as a beacon of modernization and thousands of students from China and Korea started to flock to its universities. Japan's impact grew further when it began to encroach on its neighbors' territory and imposing its racial policies and worldviews. While the subjugation of Taiwan in 1895 seems to have had a minor impact on the region, the annexation of Korea in 1910, the takeover of Manchuria in 1932–33 and, eventually, the attempt to take over China altogether in 1937–45, catalyzed the dissemination of the Japanese outlook throughout the entire region, as both Yukiko Koshiro and Urs Matthias Zachmann illustrate in this volume.<sup>129</sup>

Still, the national and regional differences in East Asia are often larger than one may expect from the commonalities listed above or from the short-term colonial impact of imperial Japan. In reality, political, cultural and even ethnic differences among the peoples of the three major

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<sup>128</sup> See Kowner's chapter (Ch. 4) in this volume.

<sup>129</sup> See also DuBois, 2006; Henry, 2005.



kingdoms and subsequently the three major nation states of East Asia were and seemingly remain greater than those found among the peoples of Europe. By the same token, the ethnic differences found among the people of China alone are often greater than any regional and—to a certain extent—even national differences found in certain parts of Europe. These profound historical, cultural and political differences among the three main civilizations of East Asia explain in part why their responses to Western race theory and racism in modern times have been so different. A close look at their differences, in fact, suggests the existence of three distinct models of reaction.

China, the region's oldest civilization, offers a fascinating and quite rare case study of prolonged resistance to Western ideas of race. Although some of its intellectuals were eager to adopt certain tenets of these ideas and despite dramatic political transitions during this period, China eventually remained committed to a Sinocentric worldview that had in the past proved capable of assimilating any foreign influence including 'barbarian' invaders. Japan offers a case study of an emulative culture. Traditionally emulating techniques and ideas from cultures it considered superior, the Japanese adoption of a foreign notion of race should hardly be surprising. What is baffling, nonetheless, was the willingness of Japanese, so aware of hierarchy and national standing, to accept theories that placed them in a lowly position for the sake of national survival and prosperity. Ultimately, it was Western racism rather than theories of race per se that progressively alienated the Japanese during the first half of the twentieth century. Korea offers a third and completely different case study of a nation under colonial rule—at least until 1945. Torn during this period between its two giant Asian neighbors, and affected also by Russia (or its Soviet heir) and the postwar United States, Korea was, therefore, mostly a pawn in the regional struggle or a hostage to Japanese colonial rule. Pre-1945 Korea does not share the relatively active patterns of adoption or the defiant reaction that characterized its neighbors. Ultimately, and despite their profound differences, China, Japan, and Korea have all developed a similar form of ethnic and cultural nationalism—mostly after 1945. This nationalism links certain forms of traditional local ethnocentrism with modern racism and regional racial backlashes. Although it positions the West as the primary and most significant Other and occasionally even as existing in diametrical opposition, the sphere of comparison has not necessarily been racial, but more often cultural, moral, and political.

All in all, both Western and East Asian racial constructions as well as mutual reactions to each other's constructions offer valuable insights



concerning the rise and mechanisms of race and racism in modern times. Despite its broad scope, the present volume could not discuss every major theme in depth. It also left off a number of consequential issues that emanate from the East Asian contact with an external racial worldview. For instance, there is a need for further elaboration on the association between racial thought and the initial rise of nationalism in East Asia, the relationship between “race” and “gender” questions, and for an additional examination of the factors that promoted or obstructed the tendency to adopt racial thought in the region. Recent studies have extensively analyzed the content and manifestation of cultural and ethnic nationalism in the region, but little has been done to uncover their racial nucleus and to separate their indigenous sources from their foreign influences. Similar lacunae are found in studies of the contemporary sentiment of ‘yellowness’ in East Asia, in a manner comparable to the large body of recent scholarship about the meaning and construction of ‘whiteness’ in the West.<sup>130</sup> Perhaps the most intricate analysis required is the sequence of reciprocal cause and effect through which Western racist policies and East Asian (racist) responses fed and aggravated each other. These omissions notwithstanding, the studies presented here seem to cover, whether separately or collectively, new territories which we hope would stimulate further research and promote an understanding of the impact of race and racism in modern and even present-day East Asia.

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<sup>130</sup> For recent scholarship about ‘whiteness,’ see McDowell, 2008: 53–54.



PART ONE

WESTERN RACE THEORIES, RACIAL IMAGES AND RACISM



## CHAPTER TWO

### EARLY MODERN EUROPEAN DIVISIONS OF MANKIND AND EAST ASIANS, 1500–1750

Walter Demel and Rotem Kowner

It is a widely accepted practice today to speak of “Europeans” and “East Asians,” and we usually consider Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans to be East Asians and feel little doubt about this identity. This, however, was not the case several centuries ago and therefore it is somewhat awkward to refer to “East Asia” as a conceptual unit in early modern Europe. Koreans, for example, were scarcely known to Europeans before the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Japan was “discovered” in 1543, and reports on Japanese—mostly written by Jesuit missionaries—started to appear a few years later.<sup>2</sup> China, indeed, was known from much earlier, but the first early modern contacts between Europeans and Chinese date from the second decade of the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Not least important, the first recorded visit of East Asians on European land took place as late as 1585, when a Japanese mission consisting of four young noblemen visited Europe. Traveling extensively through Portuguese, Spanish and Italian towns, it caused considerable sensation all over the continent—at least in its Catholic parts (see Fig. 2.1).<sup>4</sup> From the European point of view, however, the Japanese and the Chinese were completely different peoples at that time, not so much in their appearance, but certainly in their character, customs, and political situation.<sup>5</sup> This even led to a theory claiming that the Japanese stemmed from Chinese rebels who were expelled from

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Huajeong Seok’s article in this book. See, however, the seventeenth-century account of this kingdom by the Dutchman Hendrick Hamel. In Ledyard, 1971: 17–119.

<sup>2</sup> Lach, 1965–77: I: 651–688. Gerlach, 2006, tries to prove that Japan had already been “discovered” earlier than 1543 by the Portuguese. But early information on the Japanese was certainly sparse and distorted. Tomé Pires for example wrongly noted in his *Suma Oriental* (1513?) that the Japanese were not given to trading, because they had no ships like junks or were not seafaring men. Lach, 1965–77, I: 652–653.

<sup>3</sup> Demel, 1992: 47.

<sup>4</sup> Lach, 1965–77, I: 688–706; Boscaro, 1973; Moran, 1993: 6–19.

<sup>5</sup> Demel, 2002; Demel, 2004: 160–176; Demel, 2012a.

the Chinese mainland and then decided to always do just the opposite of what had been established by their forefathers.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Medieval Heritage*

It was Marco Polo who wrote the most influential medieval “travelogue” (strictly speaking, a cosmography) of East Asia. Regardless of whether he had in fact been to China (he probably had), what he says about the peoples living in this part of the world is of utmost interest. Regarding Japan—without having ever been there—Polo mentions *Zipangu* or *Cipangu*, which was eventually identified as Japan in the sixteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The island, he reports, is inhabited by white-skinned, civilized idolaters who possess gold in abundance.<sup>8</sup> It was obviously the gold and the pearls, not the people, that fascinated Polo most about Japan, since much of his description of the island is dedicated to these riches. In a similar fashion, he extolls the wealth of China and her ruler. The Great Khan Kublai (1215–1294) himself is described as being mid-sized and well-proportioned, with a white, slightly reddish face, black and beautiful eyes and a straight, prominent nose.<sup>9</sup> Beyond these rudimentary portrayals, however, Polo is hardly interested in the physical characteristics of East Asian “nations.” He only praises female beauty in a few particular cases. Later “racial” characteristics like the skin color are very rarely mentioned. On the other hand, Polo often describes the customs and character of a local population and mentions their religion or beliefs for almost every location in his journey.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> González de Mendoza, 1944 [1585]: 362–364; Linschoten, 1955: 116: “...soo hebbense alle haer usancien, ceremonien, courtosyen, etc. t’eenemael verkeert als die van Chinen.”

<sup>7</sup> Reichert, 2010: 86.

<sup>8</sup> Polo, 1928: 163: “*Les jens sunt blancs, de beles maineres et biaux. Il sunt ydules et se timent por elz et ne ont seignorie de nul autres homes for que d’eles meisme. Et si vos di qu’il on or en grandismes abondance...*” Not at all for the Mongolians (“Tatars”), and for the Chinese only specifically with regard to the inhabitants of Quinsai, Polo stated they had white faces and were handsome people. Having finished the manuscript of this volume, the editors came across Michael Keevak’s (2011) new book regarding the history of a “yellow” skin color (for a critical review, see Demel, 2012b).

<sup>9</sup> Polo, 1928: 72: “*Il est de belle grandesse, ne petit ne grant, mes est de meçaine grandesse. Il et carnu de bielle mainere; il est trop bien taliés de toutes menbres. Il a son vis blanche et vermoille come rose; les les iaus noir et biaux; les nes bien fait et bien seant.*”

<sup>10</sup> In a German edition (Polo, 1983), a passage relating to the Chinese inhabitants of Quinsai (not included in Polo, 1928) says that they “have white faces and are handsome people” (235: “*haben eine weiße Gesichtsfarbe und sind ein ansehnliches Volk*”). Moreover, the inhabitants of T(h)oloman are described as being “very handsome people, not quite

Other medieval literary descriptions concerned the appearance of Mongols or Tatars (also called Tartars meaning that they came from hell). They often mentioned their facial features, such as broad face, flat nose, peculiar eyes, high cheekbones, but also their small stature, short legs in particular. As Joseph Ziegler noted, “the Western observers were content to suggest uncritically that these were signs of a beastly, foul . . . and inhuman group, but in doing so they could not rely on a learned analysis by physiognomists.”<sup>11</sup> Still, Tatars seem to appear only once in physiognomic treatises. In other words, there was a gap between physiognomic texts, written for a small group of scholars on the one hand, and chronicles or travelogues which had another—and probably wider—readership on the other hand.<sup>12</sup> None of the latter had racial categories at its disposal.

By far the most general and important classification of mankind for medieval “Europeans” seems to have been the division into (real) Christians (i.e., Roman Catholics), heretics (such as the Cathars or adherents of the Eastern churches), Jews, heathens, and Muslims. For heretics, Jews or heathens, there was some hope of converting them to the true faith, whereas for Muslims there was less hope, especially given the fierce confrontations of the Iberian *Reconquista* and the crusades. The Arabs, on the other hand, seem to have been the first to use skin color as a means of distinguishing large groups of men and dividing them into superior and inferior categories.<sup>13</sup> One telling example is that they imported slaves from the Caucasus region and today’s Ukraine as well as from sub-Saharan Africa. In the Muslim world, however, “black” slaves seem to have been regularly less esteemed—and were therefore cheaper—than “white” ones.<sup>14</sup> In this respect, however, the Mediterranean Christian world followed suit. Since the fifteenth century, the Russian and the Ottoman empires gained power whereas the Portuguese and Spanish westward and southward expansions began and reached the Atlantic islands, West Africa and the Americas. This resulted in a shift in the European slave trade. The number of heathen or heretic Slavs and Bulgarians diminished significantly in Mediterranean

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white but brown,” and the Mongol Tartars—not necessarily the “real” Mongols—as “most beautiful and white” according to a 1931 English translation quoted by Brace, 2005: 20. An overview of the history of racial ideas is also given in Ivan Hannaford’s often-cited book (Hannaford, 1996). It does not, however, seem to be as well founded as Brace, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Ziegler, 2009: 187.

<sup>12</sup> Ziegler, 2009: 187–188.

<sup>13</sup> Flaig, 2010: 22.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis, 1990: 13, who makes clear that Islamic doctrine supported racial equality, but that the realities in Muslim countries were different (16–20). A more recent overview of the medieval Mediterranean slave trade is Zeuske, 2005: 97–152.

slave markets outside the Ottoman Empire, whereas the number of black slaves increased rapidly. It was probably within this context that the outer appearance of human beings gained importance, at least on the Iberian Peninsula, where Spain became increasingly powerful as a result of the matrimonial union of 1479, and would eventually dominate Europe.<sup>15</sup>

The origin of the word “race” is not quite clear but it is certain it emerged in the late Middle Ages and slowly came into use since the sixteenth century. Some older interpretations claim it is derived from Latin, i.e., from *radix* [root] or from *generatio* [origin, extraction]. An alternative theory suggests it originated from the Arabic *rās* [head].<sup>16</sup> Charles de Miramon has recently suggested that “race” came from the Norman *haras* [brood herd, stud farm in modern French], and was transferred to “Italian” (if one can speak of Italian at the time) as *arrazza* or as its variant, *razza*. In any case, the term appeared in the late Middle Ages in Southern European languages such as French, “Italian” or Castilian in the context of breeding and hunting and was mainly used to designate “noble” varieties of domestic animals, especially horses, dogs, and birds of prey. Though the application of “race” (in the sense of lineage) to human beings only became common in Europe from the late seventeenth century, the term had already been applied to human beings in Spain since about 1500.<sup>17</sup>

### *The Transformation of the European Outlook on the World around 1500*

There were at least three fundamental changes in European perceptions of the world around 1500. Firstly, the Christian attitudes towards other religions began to transform from those held during the Middle Ages. Jews had already been persecuted before this time, especially during the “Black Death” around 1350. However, at the time of the Castilian-Aragonese union, Spain established a new specialized bureaucratic, state-run institution—the holy inquisition. In 1492, every Spanish Jew had to decide whether he would submit to baptism or be expelled from the country. This intolerant attitude was soon applied to Muslims as well. However, the decisive point

<sup>15</sup> Demel, 2010b: 135–139; Valentin Groebner, “The carnal knowing of a coloured body: sleeping with Arabs and Blacks in the European imagination, 1300–1500,” in Eliav-Feldon et al. (eds.), 2009, 217–233, esp. 217, 224.

<sup>16</sup> For etymology, see Sommer, 1984: 137–141; Geiss, 1988: 16–17.

<sup>17</sup> Miramon, 2009; Banton, 1987, 1–27. Banton, 1977: 18, states that the meaning “descent,” and especially “noble descent” was common in English and French until about 1800 and only changed later. One can compare this with German notions such as *rassig* or *Rassepferd* which have positive connotations and are still in use.



with regard to “racism” is reached when the crucial step from discrimination on religious grounds to discrimination on “racial” grounds was taken: many Spanish theologians and jurists maintained that the children of baptized Jews or Muslims “differed in their *raza* from pure *christianos de natura*.”<sup>18</sup> Henceforth, conversion could no longer wash away the allegedly inborn stain of a “blasphemous” faith.

Secondly, Western, i.e., “Latin” Christendom was being split up. Beginning with the Hussites and continued by the Lutherans, Calvinists and others, its unity was broken apart. This had implications for the perception of Christianity as a whole: the number of heretics grew considerably however the term was defined. Since a continual war between the different denominations would have been ruinous for all concerned, political arrangements had to eventually be made. Sensing it had “lost” half of Latin Europe, the Catholic church, however, tried to compensate for its losses—not only in Europe itself, but also by winning new converts in other parts of the globe. It therefore started world-wide missionary activities. Confrontation with non-Islamic religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, with whom Europeans were completely unfamiliar at the time, were the logical consequence of this. These developments were inseparably connected to Columbus’ discovery of America in 1492 and da Gama’s discovery of the maritime route to India in 1498.<sup>19</sup>

This leads to our third point. Ancient or medieval travelers used to travel so slowly over land, but even by sea (for people were accustomed to poking around the coast) they never perceived human differences in a categorical fashion. This began to change during the Renaissance: Mariners often traveled long distances without encountering anybody and then met abruptly with a kind of people completely unlike anything they knew.<sup>20</sup> Conversely, members of unknown or supposedly legendary peoples had suddenly begun to appear in Europe since Columbus had brought some Amerindians to Spain at the end of his first voyage. What happened in the eighteenth century, when many new ethnic groups were newly “discovered” by European travelers (e.g. in Siberia or in the Pacific region), had already happened two hundred years earlier. The question was: Were they all really human beings? Did humanity also encompass *Antipodeans*, which at that time just meant that they lived in a region south of the Equator? What about the people who lived in isolation on their continent without having had contact with the “Old World” since

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<sup>18</sup> Groebner, 2009: 230.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Gründer, 1992.

<sup>20</sup> Brace 1995: 19, 21.

time immemorial and who had therefore been cut off from the Holy Gospel? As far as Amerindians were concerned, Pope Paul III answered in the affirmative in 1537: Amerindians were *veri homines* [real humans].<sup>21</sup> No such decision seemed necessary as far as East Asians were concerned. For no European traveler described them as barbarians or even as cannibals. They seemed to be at least as 'civilized' as Europeans. This was not only true of the Chinese, whose country impressed Western travelers in the sixteenth century, mostly because of its "abundant" wealth.<sup>22</sup> The Japanese, characterized as a much poorer people, were called by the "Apostle of the Indies," [St.] Francis Xavier (1506–1552), "the best [people] who have yet been discovered."<sup>23</sup> In fact, the first decades of the Christian mission in Japan were an almost unrivalled success story.<sup>24</sup> Thus, there was little cause to "denigrate" them in any way. In the same vein, the leading Jesuit stationed in late-sixteenth century Asia, the Italian Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), considered them white, cultivated and rational. For this reason, this plenipotentiary provincial Visitor [Por. *visitador*] to all the Jesuit missions in the East Indies, fostered the access of talented Japanese Christians into his order. By 1584, there were 29 Japanese Jesuits among the 85 Christian missionaries stationed in the island kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

*Racial Traits of East Asians: Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Views*

Sixteenth century visitors like Valignano did not contradict Marco Polo's account of the "whiteness" of Japanese skin. The oldest early modern narrative which mentions the outer appearance of the Japanese was written by the Spaniard García de Escalante Alvarado, based on the report of his countryman, Pero Diez, who had visited Japan in 1544. He states that "the inhabitants of these islands are good-looking, white, and bearded, with shaved heads. They are heathens, their weapon is the bow and arrow... the women have mostly very white complexions and are very beautiful." This image was confirmed by the description provided by the

<sup>21</sup> Reichert, 2010: 73, 79–80, 91, 101; Reinhard, 1983–1990, II: 65, who speaks in I: 67 of a "pigmentocracy" and mentions that East Asians and Vietnamese were accepted by the Europeans as equals since they were considered "Whites."

<sup>22</sup> Demel, 1991. A shorter English version of this article was published in Demel, 1989, 28–37.

<sup>23</sup> Lach, 1965–77, I: 663–674, quoted 664.

<sup>24</sup> It nonetheless seems to be slightly exaggerated for Charles Ralph Boxer to entitle one of his books *The Christian Century of Japan* (Boxer, 1951).

<sup>25</sup> Moran, 1993: 2, 51–53.

Portuguese captain Jorge Álvarez in 1547 at the request of Xavier. He claimed that the Japanese were of average height, well-proportioned and fair.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, the members of the Japanese mission of the 1580s were sometimes, though not always, depicted with rather white faces in contemporary pictures and were on the whole hardly recognizable as different from Europeans.<sup>27</sup>



Fig. 2.1. The Japanese delegation (Tenshō Embassy) to Catholic Europe (1582–1590).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> According to Lach, 1965–77, I: 655–656, 658, quoted 656.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Boscaro, 1973: 44–45, 172–173, 175–177, 179, 181, 183, and the reproductions from the German edition [1678] of Cornelius Hazart's *History of the Church* (shown in Kapitza, 1990, I: 154) or those of an Augsburg print from 1586 in Silva and Álvarez 1968: 35. The descriptions, however, are contradictory. Whereas Italian sources like the Milan chronicle of Urbano Monte depict the four envoys with a swarthy complexion (but also Father Diego Mesquita S.J. who was obviously a Spaniard), German sources like the Augsburg *Neue Zeyttung* from 1586 show at least three of them as rather light-skinned.

<sup>28</sup> The members of the delegation in the picture are (top, from left to right) Julião Nakaura, Father Mesquita, Mancio Itō; (bottom, from left to right) Martinho Hara, Miguel Chijiwa. Anonymous artist, 1586. This image is in the public domain (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:JapaneseEmbassy.jpg>).

The first reports on the Chinese had quite a similar tone: In 1515, the Italian Andrea Corsali, then serving the Portuguese, wrote to the Florentine duke Giuliano de' Medici that the Chinese were "*di nostra qualità*" ["of our kind"], albeit having "uglier faces with small eyes."<sup>29</sup> A few years later, the imperial secret clerk Transylvanus reported from talks with seamen that the Portuguese had discovered the Chinese, "a white and rather civilized nation, which resembles our Germans."<sup>30</sup> The first monograph about the Middle Kingdom, published by the Portuguese missionary Gaspar da Cruz in 1569, claimed that the female Chinese were "very white and gentle women."<sup>31</sup> Thus, the authors of the first reports on China agreed that the northern Chinese were white or white and red, and only the Cantonese—being more sun-burnt—were often said to be rather brown.<sup>32</sup> Since the most common belief about the causes of pigmentation seems to have been a vague theory that skin darkened according to the intensity of the sun, it would have seemed quite natural that the northern Chinese—and this applied even more obviously to peoples living towards the north, like the Mongolians—had fair skin because they lived on roughly the same latitude as southern Europeans. This idea persisted until the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>33</sup> By that time, however, doubts were raised concerning this relation when it was noted that the Polar nations—like the Lapps or the Eskimos—had rather dark skin.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Letter dated 6 January 1515, reproduced by Ramusio, 1970 [1563]: 180 [erroneously 280]: "... *gli huomini sono . . . di nostra qualità, ma di piu brutto viso, con gli occhi piccoli.*" For the statements which follow, see Demel, 1992b: 625.

<sup>30</sup> Letter dated 24 October 1522, reproduced by Grynaeus, 1537: 586: "... *candidam gentem et ciuilem satis reperunt, Germanis nostris similem.*"

<sup>31</sup> Gaspar da Cruz, 1569: 85: "*As molheres comunmente . . . sam muito aluas & gentis molheres . . .*"

<sup>32</sup> Du Jarric, 1611: 732–733: "*Les enfans en leur bas aage sont fort beaux, & gentils: car beaucoup d'iceux sont aussi blancs que ceux d'Europe: tellement qu'en la Prouince de Canton, ils sont de mesme couleur que les Espagnoles: & tant plus qu'on monte en hault vers le Septentrion, ils sont aussi plus blancs; de façon que à Paquin [Peking], ils rassemblent fort aux Italiens, ou aux François.*" In Sanz, 1958 [1577]: 31: The Cantonese are "*baços como los de Berberia*," the Chinese living further in the north, however, are "*blancos y ruuios, como en Alemania*"; 42: The inhabitants of the southern coast are "*amoriscados, como los de Fez y Marruecos*," otherwise—like Spaniards, Italians and Germans—"blancos y ruuidos [*sic?*] y de buenas disposiciones." Similarly, González de Mendoza, 1944 [1585]: 23, 38: The inhabitants of the hot city of Canton are "*morenos*," or alternatively "*amoriscados*," like the Moors of Fez or the Barbary coast who live on the same latitude. The people of inland China, however, "*son del color de alemanes, italianos y españoles, blancos y rubios, y un poco verdinegros.*"

<sup>33</sup> Demel, 1992b: 645–660.

<sup>34</sup> Buffon, 1749: 371–373.

Other traits which were later considered to be “racial characteristics” were not regarded as “natural” either. Thus, Michel Baudier (1589–1645), a French historian and compiler of the early seventeenth century, explained in his *History of the Royal Court of China* that the flat noses of the Chinese were not like this by nature. Chinese parents, he claimed, were accustomed to pressing the noses of their babies inwards in order to be able to identify foreigners at once and protect themselves against their corrupting influence. It seems, by the way, that Baudier considered this precautionary measure quite reasonable for the protection of ‘pure’ customs.<sup>35</sup>

However, the images of the Japanese and Chinese changed by the middle of the seventeenth century. Up to then, it was exceptional for a European to reflect upon the possibility that an East Asian people might be of a different descent from Europeans, as did the Jesuit missionary Lourenço Mexia when he wrote the following in 1584: “The Japanese are so different from all other peoples . . . that it is unbelievable; so much so that I might say the Japanese are a different human species, if there were differences of species in human nature at all.” When Mexia wrote this in a letter to his fellow Jesuits in Coimbra, he had already lived in Japan for several years, and had been living in Macau for more than a year—a town founded by the Portuguese, but inhabited almost from the beginning by a Chinese majority.<sup>36</sup> By the middle of the seventeenth century, however, the question of Chinese origins was raised in a religious context which might be characterized as pre-racial or even pre-racist. Isaac La Peyrère, a Huguenot (probably of Jewish descent), claimed that the Chinese as well as other heathens in Asia and America were not the offspring of (the second) Adam, but belonged to a different kind of God’s creatures. This theory, though rejected by all important Christian churches, lingered on and fostered the rise of polygenism at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>37</sup>

La Peyrère’s contemporary, the historian and theologian Georg Horn was much more influential. This Leiden professor turned down the Pre-Adamite theory and was unwilling to correct Biblical testimony—from which he had deduced, for example, that world was created on the 23rd of October, 4004 BCE—given divergent statements from Egyptian or Chinese

<sup>35</sup> Baudier, 1631: 10.

<sup>36</sup> Jorissen, 1988: 111–112, n. 27, quoted from p. 112 (letter from 6 January 1584): “*Die Japaner sind so verschieden von allen anderen Völkern . . . , daß man es sich nicht vorstellen kann; dies geht so weit, daß ich sagen würde, die Japaner seien eine andere Menschen-Spezies, wenn es in der menschlichen Natur Unterschiede der Spezies gäbe.*”

<sup>37</sup> [La Peyrère], 1655: 24–25; Popkin, 1987: esp. 5, 44–48; Livingstone, 2008: 26–51; Pagden, 2009: 308–310.

sources. However, he did attempt to interpret the Chinese historical tradition, which he and scholars all over Europe had just received through the writings of the Jesuit missionary Martino Martini, in the light of Biblical chronology.<sup>38</sup> Although he considered Chinese tradition corrupted and partly fabulous, he identified the mythological Chinese emperor Fu Xi (Fohi; allegedly mid 29th century BCE) as Adam, and the emperor Yao (Yaum; traditionally c. 2356–2255 BCE)—whom Chinese sources described as a pious man, in whose lifetime a great flood had occurred—with Noah. The builder of the Ark, however, was said to have had three sons: Japheth, Shem and Ham (or Japhet, Sem and Cham), and in this context, Horn constructed a curious theory of Chinese origins. He discussed whether China might be a colony of Egypt, an empire founded by Nimrod, one of the descendants of Ham and the forefather of the black Africans.

On the other hand, he said that when the world was divided among Noah's descendants, Japheth had received Europe, America and Northern Asia and thus had become the forefather of the white nations, which also included the Turks and the Tatars. A certain "Tzijn" was said to be descended from Japheth, who allegedly had been an ingenious man, and the inventor of painting, weaving and silk-production. Horn seems to have considered him the founder of the Chinese empire, which was therefore called "Tzijna." Last but not least, Horn regarded Shem as the ancestor of the yellowish "Indians," i.e., all "upper Asians" including the Arabs, almost all the Jews, but also the ancient "Seres"—the same people who were now called "Sinae," the early modern Latin word for "Chinese." The latter word was allegedly derived from "Cina" (meaning the Qin dynasty). In short, Horn was convinced that "the Chinese empire had been created—through whatever sort of coincidences—by the most talented descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth." Moreover, the Chinese were also the founders of Japan and Korea.<sup>39</sup> In Horn's time it was obviously not a common ideal to belong to a pure "race" in the sense of being a descendant of only one of Noah's sons. However, Ham had been cursed by his father, and since he was regarded as the forefather of all black people, this was a wonderful justification for slavery: Noah had made him and his descendants Japheth's "servants," i.e., "slaves." In any case the names of Japheth,

<sup>38</sup> Martini, 1658.

<sup>39</sup> Horn(ius), 1666: 5, 12–18, 36–38, 53–54, 65, 112, 244–245, 425, 450, quotation from p. 440: "*Sinense imperium ex Semi, Chami ac Iapheti selectissima posteritate, quibuscunque casibus, compositum fuisse.*" Cf. Livingstone, 2008: 30, 39. For the background of Horn's theory and the old doctrine of the "curse of Ham" see Goldenberg, 2003, esp. pp. 141–167, 184–186 (also for the following paragraph).



Shem, and Ham were often combined with the three familiar continents of the "Old World": Europe, Asia, and Africa, following Isidore of Seville. This was the ancient geographical division and consequently, geographers tended to divide mankind into Europeans, Asians, and Africans, and adding Americans after the fifteenth century.

Historian George Mosse referred to racism as a "visual ideology," and indeed from the early encounter between Europe and East Asia both parties produced various iconographies of each other.<sup>40</sup> Surprisingly, however, as late as the early eighteenth century each side knew very little of the other's appearance and could hardly identify one in case they came across of him or her. One of the most instructive manifestations of this limited racial knowledge is the advent of a few daring impostors, who chose to pose as East Asians. The most famous of them is George Psalmanazar (or Psalmanaazaar, 1679–1763), a Frenchman in his twenties in all probability, who caused a sensation in early eighteenth-century London. Shortly before crossing the English Channel he still wavered between two relatively unknown ethnic identities. His first choice was to become a Japanese convert to Christianity, figuring that a borrowed identity of such an inaccessible and increasingly sphinxlike nation would be difficult to unmask. In the Netherlands en route to England, he opted for a pagan Japanese, concluding it would enhance the attention he might receive. Mounting attention, however, could also increase the risk of being uncovered, so eventually Psalmanazar decided to assume the identity of an even less known Formosan.<sup>41</sup> In London, only few questioned seriously the identity of this impostor, who "had never been nearer to Formosa than the Rhine."<sup>42</sup> After all, he had not only the typical facial features and fair skin of West Europeans but also blond hair.<sup>43</sup>

The inability of the English public, including some distinguished members of the Royal Society, to detect the hoax with certainty at first seems incomprehensible. However, when one examines the visual images of East Asians available at the time this inability becomes self-evident. It was not reluctance or incapacity to conceive the Other, as some have recently suggested, but primarily lack of acquaintance with East Asians' appearance,

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<sup>40</sup> For visual ideology, see Mosse, 1990: 9.

<sup>41</sup> The best account on Psalmanazar's early life is found in his purportedly autobiographic account published a year after his death (Psalmanazar, 1764: 122–180). For additional information, see Foley, 1968: 6–14.

<sup>42</sup> Needham, 1985: 80. For the handful of experts who did question Psalmanazar's appearance and regarded him as impostor, see Foley, 1968: 17–21, 118.

<sup>43</sup> Keesen, 2004: 1.

both in real life and in graphic delineation.<sup>44</sup> Until then no Formosan or Japanese had ever visited England, while only a small number of Englishmen, among them King James II and the Oxford Orientalist Thomas Hyde, seized the opportunity to meet the young Chinese convert Michael [Miguel] Alphonsius Shen Fuzong (ca. 1658–1691). Accompanying the Jesuit Philippe Couplet in his European tour, this native of Nanjing who visited London in 1687 was in all likelihood the first East Asian to set foot on English soil.<sup>45</sup> It was a rare visit indeed, very different from the case of black Africans. Since the early seventeenth century the latter had become almost a common sight in the metropolises and ports of Western Europe, and their growing presence is attested by increasingly accurate pictorial images.

The difficulties Europeans faced in identifying the East Asian Other was not an idiosyncrasy. The reverse phenomenon happened as well. Contemporary Chinese who had never met Europeans before, could neither identify them and occasionally were unable even to single them out as non-Chinese. Europeans definitely look different, but with still vague categories and virtually no exposure to their appearance, they could be regarded as members of one of the many ethnic groups and minorities living in China. A case in point is the 38-year old Jesuit missionary Michael Walta, who was killed in 1644 during the Manchu conquest by Chinese troops, reportedly mistaking him for a member of the imperial family “hidden under the cloak of religion.”<sup>46</sup> Contemporary Japan was no different. In time of persecutions, the remaining European clergy members had either to hide or to ‘go native.’ Some opted for the latter and did it rather successfully since the locals were not necessarily capable of telling them apart. The Franciscan Diego de San Francisco, for example, was reputed to travel throughout the archipelago disguised as samurai and so was also the Dominican friar Juan Rueda de los Angeles who allegedly could pass himself off as a Japanese.<sup>47</sup> Even more telling is the story of the Dominican friar Pedro Vazquez after the end of legal Christian activity in the country. Disguised as a local official, he was able to make his way in

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Michael Keevak’s recent argument that “Europeans were reluctant to conceive—if not incapable of conceiving—(the integrity of) cultures other than their own . . .” Keevak, 2004: 13.

<sup>45</sup> For the seven-year European sojourn (1684–91) of Michael Shen Fuzong in London, where he attended the installation of the Roman Catholic archbishop there, see Foss, 1990: 121–142.

<sup>46</sup> Cited in Brockey, 2007: 110.

<sup>47</sup> For the former, see Boxer, 1967: 358; for the latter, see Boxer and Cummins, 1963: 8.



1622 not only in the busy streets of Nagasaki but also to enter the heavily guarded prison there, where he listened to the final confessions of his associates awaiting martyrdom.<sup>48</sup>

### *The Enlightenment and Racial Divisions*

The great Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (Carl von Linné, 1707–1778) is unquestionably the harbinger of modern taxonomy. Linnaeus also produced the first geographical division of mankind into a number of varieties, each characterized by distinct physical features, skin color in particular, as well as cultural and spiritual traits. Although his classification of humanity was still tinged by ancient geographical division, Linnaeus was the first (in 1735) to integrate mankind, obviously at the top, into the animal kingdom (see Fig. 2.2). Despite his pioneering achievement, however, it was not the first division of mankind the European Enlightenment produced. Some five decades earlier the French physician and traveler François Bernier had already proposed a somewhat different taxonomy.<sup>49</sup> The inner motives of both, however, were not as different. In a nutshell, the overarching and central question for Enlightenment thinking could be formulated as “What is man?” This led philosophers as well as naturalists (many learned men were both at the time) to consider more detailed questions such as: What are the characteristics of man—those which make him different from apes? Are there ape-men or are at least some varieties of mankind more ape-like than others? Do “monstrous races” really exist, as had been assumed since antiquity? Does the outer appearance of men or certain groups of men reflect their inner values, their characters (as Galen’s still influential doctrine of the four “humors” suggested)? Can men be classified, and, if so, how can this be done? Were human features innate or the result of a dominant external factor (and if they were, which one? climate? natural surroundings? nourishment? customs? political organization?) or were they the result of a combination of several internal and/or external factors?

<sup>48</sup> Boxer, 1967: 358.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. the first section of Demel’s chapter (Ch. 3) in this volume. In later editions, Linnaeus added other varieties: the “wild man” (*homo ferus*), the “monstrous man” (*homo monstrosus*), and, as a “nocturnal” subcategory, the troglodytes or cave-dwellers.

[illegible]

Fig. 2.2. Carl Linnaeus' first classification of the Animal Kingdom in the first edition of his taxonomic tract *Systema Naturae* (1735). The human varieties, including *Homo Asiaticus*, occupy the upper part of the *Quadrupedia* column (on the left).<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Linnaeus, 1735: 1–2. This image is in the public domain ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Linnaeus\\_-\\_Regnum\\_Animale\\_%281735%29.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Linnaeus_-_Regnum_Animale_%281735%29.png)).

Linnaeus' endeavors reflect two central characteristics of scientific concern in the Age of Enlightenment: to eagerly and systematically collect data and to rearrange knowledge in a new, "rational" system based on the Aristotelian tradition of logical division. Nevertheless, religious substructures still lingered beneath eighteenth-century works of systematic biology. One was the traditional biblical chronology and the conviction that the earth was no older than a few thousand years. It made explanations suggesting a common descent of different species seem implausible since the changes that could be perceived within historical times (at least in the preceding 2000 years) were rather small. Another was the idea of the "Great Chain of Being," beginning with the Creator and continuing with the created world ranging from man as the highest living creature to inanimate nature at the other end. A much-debated question, therefore, was whether the phenomena of the created world form a continuum with indiscernible transitions (as the French naturalist Buffon had suggested in the first volume of his *Histoire naturelle*), or whether every kind of creature represented a discrete step of its own on the natural ladder from top to bottom. If the former was true, then any taxonomy was artificial and merely a matter of convenience applied for didactic reasons. In the latter case, every species represented a single idea of God which could not disappear or evolve in the course of time. Morphological similarities formed the basis of Linnaeus' taxonomy, but these did not suggest a common origin. Other scholars, however, were looking for just such an origin and they interpreted similarities as more or less reliable signs of actual lineage relationships.<sup>51</sup> In any case, categorizing was the means for rearranging the fast-growing knowledge about nature in order not to be overwhelmed by the sheer amount of new information. But there was no consensus among "natural scientists" regarding terminology—whether or when one should speak of "species," "races," "varieties" etc. Moreover, every taxonomist developed his own system of classifying mankind, and thus there were as many systems as there were systematizers.

Some authors spoke, for example, of an "English race" as a synonym for an "English nation," while others described at least parts of a national history as a long struggle between different races—for example, between Franks and Gauls in France, and between Normans and Anglo-Saxons in England.<sup>52</sup> The fact that racial theories and modern nationalism developed at around the same time, i.e., in the second half of the eighteenth

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<sup>51</sup> Brace, 2005: 22–32; Banton, 1987: 2–4.

<sup>52</sup> Banton, 1987: 12–13.

century, can hardly be considered coincidental. Both terms imply a common descent—nation is derived from the Latin *nasci* [to be born]. Of course, nobody was able to prove that all the Germans stemmed from the small Germanic tribes described by Tacitus or that all the Chinese stemmed from the legendary “Yellow Emperor.” Speculation was therefore rife among historians and men of letters, who elevated half-historical, half-mythical figures like the Cheruskan chieftain Arminius to the level of “national heroes,” and writers like Dante to “national poets” etc. This was an attempt at the creation of an identity based on values and aesthetics. Nevertheless, wherever possible, scholars also tried to prove the social constructions of “nations” and “races” as being “natural” by employing methods that were considered modern and scientific.<sup>53</sup>

Modern physics is a mathematically-based science. In the Age of Enlightenment, however, the English “physics” [Ger. *Naturlehre*] was still a generic term for all the developing natural sciences. Medicine was also included in this category, and this illustrates why “physicist” and “physician” are both derives from the Greek word *physis* [nature]. However, since Newton had proved the applicability of the mathematical method for identifying “natural laws” in astronomy, a tendency towards a quantitative approach dominated the various fields of the natural sciences. Anatomists like Blumenbach and the Dutch Petrus [Pieter] Camper tried to describe and depict their findings in a differentiated and exact way. Camper in particular not only took measurements, but also calculated the “facial angles” of the skulls he had collected. These measurements were not without problems, however: Human skulls or complete corpses were not easily obtainable, particularly not those of non-European people, and among these, East Asian specimens were still much rarer than African exemplars. In any case, the application of (quantitative) scientific methods did not exclude an underlying racial prejudice and this could sometimes even be used to confirm their supposed rationality.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the

<sup>53</sup> Cf. e.g. Anderson, 1983; Schulze, 1994.

<sup>54</sup> Meijer, 1999: 2–5, 172–177, tries to prove that Camper was a propagator of racial equality and his doctrine of the “facial line” was distorted by Soemmerring, Cuvier and others. On the occasion of a visit to Göttingen, Camper had described his doctrine to Blumenbach, Lichtenberg and Soemmerring as early as 1779. He even possessed an (incomplete) Kalmyk skull since 1768 at the latest (considered by him as being extremely ugly), which served him as a characteristic “for all Asia, from Siberia to New Zealand, and also North America since the North American tribes seemed to have migrated from the northern countries of Asia” (22, 29, 105–6, 108, 139, 144, quotation in p. 106). Therefore, it might be that it was Camper, who suggested to Blumenbach that the Kalmyks could be the representatives of at least a great proportion of the inhabitants of Asia. Camper’s calculations nonetheless

application of quantitative data for classifying human beings can also be considered prejudiced in a sense. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that this approach was challenged, especially in early nineteenth century Germany, by a romantic “natural philosophy,” which used different elements for its taxonomies.<sup>55</sup>

The overall impact of the Age of Enlightenment on European racial thought was momentous. What Roxann Wheeler has said about eighteenth-century Britain, may be true for “enlightened” Europe as a whole: “... the ideology of human variety broadly changed from being articulated primarily through religious difference, which included such things as political governance and civil life, to being articulated primarily through scientific categories derived from natural history that featured external characteristics of the human body—color, facial features, and hair texture.”<sup>56</sup> And yet, in 1750 the concept of race was still a far cry from what it would become half a century later. This was especially relevant to East Asians, as the next chapter demonstrates. By 1800, the European view of them would transform substantially—the peoples of East Asia would be encapsulated within a single racial entity and subsequent relations with them and any interpretation of their behavior would be shaped by this construction. Thereafter Europeans and North Americans would refer to them collectively as Mongolians; regard them as having an immutable character and relegate them to a secondary position in a fixed racial hierarchy.

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showed a great difference between the occipital foramina of a Kalmyk and a Chinese. Incidentally, he had met his first and only Chinese only in 1785. Buffon, for example, had never seen any (23, 113 and fn. 141).

<sup>55</sup> The physician and natural philosopher Lorenz Oken, for instance, explained in his *Lehrbuch der Naturgeschichte* [“Textbook on natural history”; 1816], that the “spiritual animals” (*Geistestiere*)—men—combined all the extreme character traits in the animal kingdom. They resembled, he said, “only themselves, nature, and God” (“*ganz nur sich, der Natur, und Gott*”), but could be divided into “*Leien*”—his term for “races”: “1. Lei Sylvan man, *black man*; black skin... African, Australian? 2. Lei. Satyr man, *red man*; skin red like copper... American. 3. Lei. Faun man, *yellow man*; skin brown-yellow... Asian. 4. Lei. Pan man, *white man*;... European.” (“1. Lei. Sylvanmensch, *Schwarzer*; Haut schwarz... Afrikaner, Australier? 2. Lei. Satyrmensch, *Rother*; Haut kupferroth... Amerikaner. 3. Lei. Faunmensch, *Gelber*; Haut braungelb... Asier. 4. Lei. Panmensch, *Weißer*; Haut weiß... Europäer.”) In such a way, Oken incorporated myths, colors, continents, elements etc. Oken, 1816: 1233.

<sup>56</sup> Wheeler, 2006: 289.



### CHAPTER THREE

## HOW THE “MONGOLOID RACE” CAME INTO BEING: LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CONSTRUCTIONS OF EAST ASIANS IN EUROPE

Walter Demel

The eighteenth century was no doubt the most original and productive epoch in the long development of the racial idea. This “cradle of modern racism,” as one prominent historian referred to it, lasted, in fact, a few decades.<sup>1</sup> Taking part during the final years of the Age of Enlightenment and heralding the modern era, this stage served as a seminal and indispensable link between a myriad of early modern ethnographic observations and the scientific racism of the nineteenth century. The idea of immutable physical characteristics, the division of mankind into a few great races each with a list of inscribed traits, the inclusion of these races within an all-embracing natural taxonomy, and the emergence of an explicit hierarchical order separating the races and headed by Europeans were all the products of that century, its final decades in particular. Side by side, it was here when Europeans relegated East Asians to a secondary position for the first time and began their long process of inferiorization. This chapter examines the developments concerning the idea of an East Asian “race” during this crucial epoch and focuses on the way it came to be referred to as “*mongolische Rasse*” in German; “Mongol,” “Mongolian,” or “Mongoloid race” in English.<sup>2</sup> This outcome is astonishing enough. For Mongols had certainly played an important role in world and in European history. But this was true for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, not for the eighteenth, which in turn was intensely occupied with things

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<sup>1</sup> Mosse, 1978: 1.

<sup>2</sup> In German, only the term *mongolische Rasse* exists. As far as I can tell, the first English translators preferred “Mongolian” (but sometimes also “Mongul” or “Mongolic”) race or variety, and this was commonly used in the nineteenth century, whereas “Mongoloid race” was preferred after World War I. Cf. the sources reproduced by Augstein, 1996: 65–66, 111, 132, 184. In the second half of the eighteenth century in particular, the terminology such as it relates to “race,” “variety,” “class” etc. was variant, even in Blumenbach. See Klatt, 2010: 19–25. Hudson (1996) tries to delineate changes of the meaning of “race,” “nation” and “tribe”.



Chinese, not only insofar as material culture was concerned, but also in intellectual discussions.

*An Asian Race—But Not a “Mongolian” One*

Debates employing the term “race” for categorizing human beings are obviously much older than the creation of the term “Mongolian race.”<sup>3</sup> It is well known that an article published in the *Journal des Sçavans* [Savants] in 1684, almost certainly written by the French medical doctor François Bernier, inaugurated this discussion. Bernier described four races and characterized the races he located in East Asia and parts of South East, Central and even West Asia in contrast to what was later called the Caucasian Race as having broad shoulders, a flat face, a flattened nose, small, long and cavernous pig-eyes and just three whiskers instead of a beard. He considered them, however, as “really white” [*véritablement blancs*].<sup>4</sup> About two decades later, Leibniz mentioned four divisions of mankind in the “Old World,” two extreme ones—the Laplanders and the blackish people—and two intermediary ones: the Europeans and the inhabitants of the Extreme East and the Northeastern Eurasian continent.<sup>5</sup>

Carl Linnaeus (Carl von Linné, 1707–1778), the founding father of the biological terminology still in use today, was even less subtle in his distinctions compared to Bernier, since he just followed the traditional geographical divisions and therefore only knew of a “homo Asiaticus.” He described this generic Asian as being *fuscus* [dark] in some of the earlier editions of his *Systema naturae* (first published in 1735), and as *luridus*, i.e., light yellow or yellow in the later ones. The Abbé de la Croix then divided mankind into blacks and whites, and the latter he subdivided into proper white, brown, olive-tinged and yellowish people, counting Japanese and Northern Chinese among the first and Southern Chinese among the second, albeit ascribing the same form of faces and bodies to both

<sup>3</sup> The following explanations are based on Demel, 1992a, and on Blumenbach, 1798: 208–212 entitled *Die Einteilung des Menschengeschlechts in Racen, nach andern Schriftstellern* [The Classification of Mankind into Races, by Other Authors].

<sup>4</sup> [Anonymous], 1684: 136.

<sup>5</sup> Leibniz, 1718: 159–160: “*Ego dividerem istos homines nostri continentis in extremos & medios. Extremi sunt Lappones & Nigritae, quorum ultimi Cafres: Lappones ursorum, Nigritae simiarum naturam habent, quae ipsis domestica animalia... Medii homines alii vultu depresso & ossiformi; tales sunt extremi Orientis incolae & Septentrionis orientalis, caeteri nostris similes. Videmur nos vultu Leonem referre, Lappones ursum. Etiam orientales extremi aliquid simiae habent... Ego velim regiones dividi per lingvas & has notari in cartis...*”



of them.<sup>6</sup> In 1775, Kant provided a further differentiation between four races: 1. Whites, among whom he also enlisted the Turkish-Tartar peoples, 2. Negroes, 3. Hunnics and 4. Hindustanis. All other peoples were considered to be mere "half-races."<sup>7</sup> In the same year, the Scottish physician John Hunter developed a scheme of seven differently colored varieties, ranging from black, blackish, copper-colored, red, brown and brownish to white, whereby the Tartars and the Chinese, but also the Arabs, Persians and others, were considered "brown."<sup>8</sup> Three years later, Brunswick professor Eberhard August Wilhelm von Zimmermann believed in the existence of four (but in another sense very many) races, one of them being regarded as living in Southeast Asia, China, Korea, etc. The Chinese shape, however, seemed to him "to be more a degenerated Tatar than an Indian one . . ."<sup>9</sup>

In 1749, Buffon, who eventually recognized six races, had mentioned an allegedly extremely ugly "Tartar race" (*race Tartare*) in his *Histoire naturelle*. It was said that this "race"—which Buffon also called the "Tartar nation" (*nation Tartare*)—lived in the huge region between the Northern and Western provinces of China, the Northern borders of the Mogul Empire and Persia, the Northern coast of the Black Sea and the coastal regions of the Polar Sea, which were inhabited by the "Lappish race" (*race Laponne*), the Lapps being in fact degenerated Tartars. All the Tartars had, for example, large, flat, wrinkled faces, short, thick noses, small, cavernous eyes, protruding cheeks, a tanned and olive-tinged skin, black hair, a mid-sized, but very strong and robust stature, thick thighs and short legs, and in a similar manner to the Chinese, scarce beards. Some pages later, Buffon added that the Chinese (though he had ascribed beautiful women to them) were not so different from the Tartars, "and it is even not certain that they belong to a different race; the only thing that could make it believable is the total difference of the nature of these two peoples' conventions and customs." Whereas the Tartars were regularly proud, bellicose, hard or even brutal, and hunters who loved exertions and independence, the Chinese possessed the absolute opposite characteristics.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> La Croix, 1769: 60–63. For Linnaeus cf. Demel, 1992a: 645 with references.

<sup>7</sup> Kant, 1775.

<sup>8</sup> Hunter, 1775.

<sup>9</sup> Zimmermann, 1778: 77, 114–5, quotation 111: "die chinesische Gestalt mehr eine ausgeartete tatarische, als eine indianische zu sein . . ."

<sup>10</sup> Buffon, 1749: 379–85, quoted from 384–5, reproduced in Bernasconi, 2001, here in vol. 2: "& il n'est pas même sûr qu'ils soient d'une autre race; la seule chose qui pourrait le faire croire, c'est la différence totale du naturel des mœurs & des coutumes de ces deux peuples."

However, as Buffon explained in 1777, only the remains of this race were still living. Among the peoples that still existed, he numbered the Ostiaks, Kalmyks, Yakuts and Tunguses. Their customs, he said, were dissimilar, but they resembled each other in the shape of their bodies and in the deformity of their features. Since the Russians had established themselves in Siberia and the adjacent regions, however, these peoples had often intermingled with the Russians and that had, according to Buffon, changed their bodies and customs to a great extent. Referring to the contemporary German voyagers Johann Georg Gmelin and Gerhard Friedrich Müller, Buffon explained that the Ostiaks had had black hair in the past, but nowadays had blond or better to say red hair. The Tunguses were said to be the nuance between the "race" of the Samoyeds and that of the Tartars, the prototype—or caricature—of whom were the Kalmyks, the most ugly of all men.<sup>11</sup> In other words: Buffon's Tartar race hardly existed any longer in its original form with the possible exception of the Kalmyks.

In his *On the Different Races of Men* (1775) Kant seems to be the first to have used an expression very near to *mongolische Rasse*, namely "mongalische . . . Race," albeit only casually: "I believe it necessary to assume only four races of man in order to derive from them all the differences which are ascertainable on first sight and which perpetuate themselves. They are (1) the race of Whites, (2) the Negro race, (3) the Hunnic (Mongul or Kalmyk race), (4) the Hindu or Hindustanic race. . . . The Kalmyk race seems to be purest among the Khoshots; among the Torguts it apparently is somewhat mixed with Tataric blood; among the Dzingari more so; it is the same which in antiquity went under the name of Huns, later that of Mongols (in a wider sense) and now of Oliuts." To Kant, the Chinese were probably a "mixed race": "The Hindustanic blood mixed with that of the ancient Scythians (in and around Tibet), plus more or less of the Hunnic, has perhaps generated the inhabitants of the farther peninsula of India as mixed races—the Tonkinese and the Chinese."<sup>12</sup> Thus, Kant was the first scholar who spoke of the

<sup>11</sup> Buffon, 1777: 484–7, also reproduced in Bernasconi, 2001, vol. 2. Buffon had combined Linnaeus' concept with his belief in the decisive influence of climate. Cf. Marino, 1995: 88.

<sup>12</sup> The English version follows an older translation reproduced by Eze, 1997: 40–41, which, however, renders *mongalisch* as "Mongolian." Kant's revised text of 1777 reads: "Ich glaube, man habe nur nöthig, vier Racen derselben anzunehmen, um alle dem ersten Blick kenntliche und sich perpetuirende Unterschiede davon ableiten zu können. Sie sind 1) die Race der Weißen, 2) die Negerrace, 3) die Hunnische (Mungalische oder Kalmuckische) Race, 4) die Hinduische oder Hindistanische Race. . . . Das hindistanische Blut, vermischt mit dem der alten Scyten (in und um Tibet) und mehr oder weniger von dem hunnischen, hat vielleicht die Bewohner der jenseitigen Halbinsel Indiens, die Tonquinesen und Schinesen, als eine vermischte Race erzeugt." Bernasconi, 2001, vol. 3: 133, 135. In 1775, Kant had formulated the first sentence as follows: "Ich glaube mit vier Racen derselben auszulangen, um alle erbliche

Mongols, and especially the Kalmyks, and not of the Chinese as the core group of an Asian "race." He probably did so following Buffon, but replacing "Tartar" with "Hun" and "Mongul" with "Kalmyk" respectively—though only in this single article published in 1775 to announce his lectures and twice republished with additions—in 1777 and in 1781.

Several years later, in his "Determination of the Term of a Human Race" (1785), he develops other criteria for differentiating mankind into four races. Under the title "One can assume four different classes of men with regard to skin color," he explains: "We certainly do not know more heritable differences of skin color than those of the Whites, the yellow Indians, the Negroes and the copper-colored red Indians."<sup>13</sup> He later remarks: "I have assumed only four races of the human species: this does not mean that I am completely sure that there are no traces of any more of them, but since only they prove what I require for the character of a race, namely the procreation of offspring with hereditary mixed characteristics [when mixing with another race]."<sup>14</sup> And, he adds, it would be strange if mixture between a Mongol and a European should extinct the Mongol's characteristic traits completely, whereas in crosses between Mongolians and southern peoples—presumably Indians—they were still more or less recognizable, such as with the Chinese. But, he continues, "the Mongolian peculiarity actually concerns the shape [of the body], not the color [of the skin], the inevitable ingeneration (*Anartung* [the assignment to a 'genus']) which, due to the present experience, is the only sign of a racial character."<sup>15</sup> In other words: Kant relinquished the idea of a "Mongolian race"—which then was picked up by Blumenbach.

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*und sich perpetuirende Unterschiede derselben davon ableiten zu können.*" Kant, 1775: 4, cf. Kant, 1902–1983, I/II: 432, and, for Kant's conception of race, Shell (2006): esp. pp. 62–63. Kant, 1775: 8–10 ascribes a reddish-brown color to the inhabitants of the polar region, allegedly a result of the cold, dry, "acid" air of this area. This color, together with a beardless chin, a crushed nose, thin lips, a flat face, and black hair are characteristic, according to Kant, of the Kalmyk form.

<sup>13</sup> Kant, 1785: 93: "*Wir kennen mit gewissheit nicht mehr erbliche Unterschiede der Hautfarbe, als die: der Weißen, der gelben Indianer, der Neger und der kupferfarbig-rothen Amerikaner.*"

<sup>14</sup> Kant, 1785: 100–101: "*Ich habe nur vier Racen der Menschengattung angenommen: nicht als ob ich ganz gewiß wäre, es gebe nirgend eine Spur von noch mehreren, sondern weil bloß an diesen das, was ich zum Charakter einer Race fordere, nämlich die halbschlächttige Zeugung, ausgemacht, bei keiner anderen Menschenklasse aber genugsam bewiesen ist.*" In a footnote on p. 100, Kant explains that for him, the first division of a species (*Gattung*) is into "classes" (*Klassen*). Then, regarding ancestry, one must determine whether these classes represented the same number of varieties (*Arten*) or just races (*Racen*).

<sup>15</sup> Kant, 1785: 101: "*...die mongolische Eigenthümlichkeit betrifft eigentlich die Gestalt, nicht die Farbe, von welcher allein die bisherige Erfahrung eine unausbleibliche Anartung als den Charakter einer Race gelehrt hat.*" The term *Anartung* was uncommon even in Kant's

*The Different Editions of Blumenbach's De Generis Humani  
Varietate Nativa*

Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (see Fig. 3.1) studied medicine at the University of Jena since 1769 and continued his studies at the University of Göttingen since 1772. Three years later, he received his doctoral degree with his dissertation *De generis humani varietate nativa* ['On the native variety of the human species'], which became better known with the extended edition, published in 1781. Even more successful was the voluminous third edition of 1795—virtually a new book—which was translated (with some modifications accepted by the author) into German in 1798 and French in 1804.<sup>16</sup>



Fig. 3.1. Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) in the winter of his life.<sup>17</sup>

time. Zammito, 2006: 42, notes that as early as the end of the revised text of 1777, Kant had replaced the Huns with the American Indians as his fourth race when presenting a second scheme of races.

<sup>16</sup> Bernasconi, 2001, vol. 4, editor's note, p. V: "In the autumn of 1775 he [Blumenbach] submitted his dissertation... A second unchanged printing of this work appeared in the following year." Marino, 1995: 121, notes that the third edition was almost three times as large as the first one. The background of Blumenbach's dissertation is described by Zammito, 2006: 43–48, whose suggestion that Meiners might have been the precipitator of both Blumenbach's and Kant's essays on race is rather daring in my view.

<sup>17</sup> Pencil drawing by Ludwig Emil Grimm. Historical museum of the city of Hanau, Germany. This image is in the public domain ([http://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Datei:Blumenbach,\\_Johann\\_Friedrich\\_%281752-1840%29.jpg&filetimestamp=20090706073047](http://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Datei:Blumenbach,_Johann_Friedrich_%281752-1840%29.jpg&filetimestamp=20090706073047)).

In the original edition, Blumenbach described the race living between the Ganges and the Amur rivers as people with almost oval heads, flat faces, small noses, and narrow eyes which pulled towards the temples. He obviously considered the Chinese as the prototype of this race, since he claimed that all this race's characteristic features were so well known from Chinese pictures and figurines that they almost did not have to be mentioned. "Perfectly alike," he added, "were those Chinese whom the most venerable Büttner saw in London, and the extremely learned botanist Whang At Tong (i.e., the yellow man from the East), with whom the most venerable Lichtenberg had a conversation in the same town."<sup>18</sup> Christian Wilhelm Büttner (1716–1801), Blumenbach's first source of information, was a professor of natural history and chemistry at the University of Göttingen and one of Lichtenberg's professors, who had sent a letter to his friend Blumenbach shortly before the latter's disputation. In the letter, Lichtenberg mentioned that the name of his Chinese acquaintance meant "the yellow man from the East" and that this person's head was rather egg-shaped.<sup>19</sup>

Two points appear to be characteristic of Blumenbach's approach: Firstly, skin color was not a central element in his categorization of races. The "yellow" color was just casually mentioned in the context of what would later be called the "yellow race." Instead, he concentrated on facial features and on the issue of whether these had something to do with the shape of the skull. In 1775 he still had his doubts in this respect, for he continued his remark on Whang At Tong's features with the comment that the oval shape of the Chinese head seems to have to be ascribed more to the soft parts of the face than to the structure of the bones. As evidence for his argument, he drew on the fact that Buffon's assistant Daubenton had examined several Chinese and Tatar skulls and had stated that they did not differ in any way from the ordinary skulls of Europeans. Secondly, we must remember that in 1775 Blumenbach still had no name for this

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<sup>18</sup> "*Oualia fere eorum capita, facies planae, oculi angusti, versus canthos externos protracti, nasus parui, et quae sunt huius generis reliqua ex copiosis ipsorum Chinesium picturis, signisque murrhinis et e smectite scalptis adeo nota sunt vt vix observari egeant. Perfecte tales erant illi Chinenses quos EXC. BÜTTNERVS Londini vidit, et botanices studiosissimus WHANG AT TONG (i.e. flauus ex oriente) quocum EXC. LICHTENBERG nuper ibidem loci versatus est.*" Blumenbach, 1776: 65.

<sup>19</sup> Lichtenberg to Blumenbach, London, 10 June 1775, in Dougherty, 2006–07, vol. I, Letter 10: 18. From Dean E.G. Baldringer's letter to his colleagues from the Faculty of Medicine, dated 4 July 1775, we learn that Blumenbach's disputation was scheduled for the 13th.

race, which to him was just the “second” of his four human varieties (*varietas altera*).<sup>20</sup>

This did not change in the second edition of his dissertation although Blumenbach spoke, in a letter to Petrus Camper, of the “many improvements the adjoin’d edition of my Dissertation inauguralis has obtain’d by Your penetrative & sagacious Observations on the face of the Negroes, on the Orang-outang &c&c.”<sup>21</sup> In this edition, Blumenbach discussed the “color of the human body” in a more extensive fashion. He was, however, too cautious to declare it the most important characteristic of his “races.” At any rate, East Asians did not play a role in his argumentation when he said that the differences between an Ethiopian, a white person and an American Indian seemed to be so obvious that it could hardly be surprising that even famous men had considered them as belonging to different species of mankind. Blumenbach did not, in any case, ascribe a special color of the skin to his “second variety,” nor did he do so with regard to his newly constructed “fifth variety,” which he believed to possess a characteristic “skull shape.”<sup>22</sup> In Blumenbach’s view, Chinese heads were generally so deformed that it was hard to decide what had to be attributed to nature and what to art (see Fig. 3.2). He nonetheless still found the Chinese to be the most typical representatives of his “second variety,” claiming that “the most famous examples of this variety were provided by the Chinese, with their almost globose faces, a small and sharp nose . . .” etc.<sup>23</sup> This was still the case in 1788 since even in the second edition of his “Handbook,” published during this very year, Blumenbach explicitly said with regard to this variety: “As an ideal of their formation, one should think of the Chinese.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “Attamen haec caput fingendi artificia magis ad molles faciei partes, quam ad ossum compagem pertinere videntur, cum Cl. DAVBENTON plura Chinensium, Tattarorumque recenset crania, eaque nullo modo a vulgaribus Europaeorum caluariis differe dicat.” Blumenbach, 1776: 65. At that time, Blumenbach still counted the Kalmyks among the “first variety” (Blumenbach, 1776: 62).

<sup>21</sup> Blumenbach to Camper, Göttingen, 22 May 1781, in Dougherty, 2006–07, I, Letter 153: 244–245.

<sup>22</sup> Blumenbach, 1781: 61, 77, 87–88.

<sup>23</sup> Blumenbach, 1781: 9: “Huius varietatis clarissima exempla praebent Sinenses, globosa fere facie, naso paruo et acuto . . . , quos tamen tota capita sibi adeo deformia reddere diximus, vt in his, quid naturae quid arti tribuendum sit vix adhuc dignosci queat.”

<sup>24</sup> Blumenbach, 1788: 63: “Als Ideal ihrer Gestaltung denke man sich die Chinesen.”

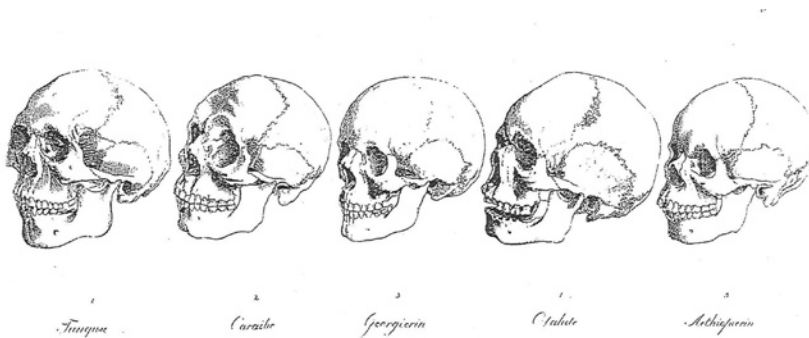


Fig. 3.2. Blumenbach's five races as demonstrated by skulls. The East Asian ("Tungus") is on the left.<sup>25</sup>

Things changed completely some years later with the publication of the third edition of *De . . . varietate* and its German translation. One point to remember is that in the meantime, Blumenbach had added a fifth race living in the Indo-Pacific region between Madagascar and the Easter Island.<sup>26</sup> He described it as a heterogeneous transition between the Caucasian and the Ethiopian races. Supposedly, it was mainly unified by a common language, namely Malay. Therefore, Blumenbach called it the Malay race—a rather strange criterion for an anatomist! But this name seems to have had the advantage of covering all the peoples in this region of the world discovered since the voyages of James Cook. Another point is that Blumenbach gave clear-cut images of all five races for the first time. Admittedly, he emphasized that all distinguishing marks could not be examined in isolation, but only in connection with each other, and even then they were not so constant as to rule out innumerable exceptions. In his *Handbook on Natural History*, published in many editions since 1779, he even regularly and explicitly stated that races were largely separated by very arbitrary limits. Nevertheless, he considered his subsequent overview in both books to be conceived in such a way as to provide sufficiently

<sup>25</sup> Blumenbach, 1798. This image is in the public domain ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Blumenbach%27s\\_five\\_races.JPG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Blumenbach%27s_five_races.JPG)).

<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, Blumenbach had already added this fifth variety—the "Australasians and Polynesians"—in his *Handbuch der Naturgeschichte* the first edition of which was published in 1779 (Blumenbach, 1779: 64). However, Blumenbach, 1781: 87–88, only very briefly mentions the "form of the skulls of a fifth variety of men" (*forma craniorum quintae hominum varietatis*), for which he only had an example from the island of Mallicolo—currently a part of the state of Vanuatu.



“general” clear notions. This didactical approach has proved extremely successful.<sup>27</sup>

Blumenbach enumerated several traits, beginning with different skin colors, continuing with hair color and texture, and ending with the shape of the skull and face, which were described in relative detail. In this context, the race Blumenbach now called Mongolian was characterized as yellow and rather olive-tinged—the German version used the single word *gelbbraun*—with black, rather rigid but sparse hair, semi-square heads, broad and flat faces etc. Apart from the North European Finns and Lapps or Eskimos, Blumenbach counted all Asian peoples who lived east of the river Ob, the Caspian Sea and the Ganges among this race, except the Malays on the Southeast Asian peninsula. For the now famous Göttingen professor, the “Mongolian race” became an “extreme” one, since he considered the American Indians to be the degenerative transition between the Caucasian and Mongolian races, such that the Caucasians appeared as the “central” race from which the others had degenerated on both sides.<sup>28</sup> It should be stressed, however, that Blumenbach’s use of the term “degeneration” was more neutral than negative. By “degeneration,” he referred to an “adaptation” of an original form to new natural environments rather than its “degradation.”<sup>29</sup>

### *Historiography, Travelogues and Racial Theory*

In order to explain this concept and its changes, one must consider the intellectual situation of Göttingen. A university had been founded in this Lower Saxony town in 1736–37. Here, for the first time, the task of giving lectures was combined with the obligation to conduct and publish research. Göttingen soon became known as a center of a “universal” historiography which—under English influence—flourished there with Johann Christoph Gatterer (1727–1799) and August Ludwig von Schlözer (1735–1809). Both scholars examined their sources, including travelogues, in a critical

<sup>27</sup> Blumenbach is often called the “father of anthropology,” or the “father of human racial science.” E.g., Mühlmann, 1984: 58.

<sup>28</sup> Blumenbach, 1795: 319–321, 287–292, cf. 120; Blumenbach, 1798: 223–224, 204–207; Blumenbach, 1830: 56: “*keine andere, als sehr willkührliche Grenzen.*” A similar formulation appeared already in the first edition, Blumenbach 1779: 63: “*eigentlich keine bestimmten Grenzen.*”

<sup>29</sup> This is overlooked, for example, by Eze’s comment about Blumenbach (Eze (ed.), 1997: 79). Cf. Bindman, 2002: 195–196; Zammito, 2006: 49.



manner and doubted such matters as the reliability of the oldest Chinese annals. However, while Gatterer held China and the Chinese in relatively high esteem, Schlözer called China "the most stupid empire in the world," for being unable to use its immense resources reasonably.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Schlözer believed that modern world history had been dominated by nine principal nations or classes of peoples, among whom were the Turks or Tatars, the Chinese and the Mongols, who had become the greatest conquerors of all times, but were currently mostly subjected to foreign rulers.<sup>31</sup> The outer appearance of these peoples, however, was hardly a subject for the two historians. Gatterer casually described the Chinese ideal of bodily beauty but not the "average reality" of their bodily forms and mentioned that the Japanese probably stemmed from the Tatars.<sup>32</sup> Schlözer asked, in his *Preparation for a World History for Children*, why such a wide variety of people could have descended from a single couple—Adam and Eve. His answer was that bodily differences mainly resulted from different climates, food and clothing, whereas intellectual and cultural diversity was also the result of education and ways of living.<sup>33</sup>

Being a center of global history, Göttingen became a hub for globally oriented anthropology as well. Or, to express it with a slight exaggeration: It became what would be called in German the most important *Hexenküche* [witch's kitchen] of racial theories. One of its first 'cooks' was Johann Christian Polycarp Erxleben (1744–1777). He was the scion of a "medical family"—not only were his grandfather and uncle physicians, but even his mother, the first woman in the Holy Roman Empire to have become a doctor of medicine. In Göttingen, Erxleben wrote a dissertation on the classification of mammals in 1767.<sup>34</sup> He was obviously an avid reader of travel reports. Soon, he published not only *Anfangsgründe der Chemie* [(The) Origins of Chemistry] and *Anfangsgründe der Naturlehre* [(The) Origins of Physics]—later continued by Lichtenberg—but also *Anfangsgründe der Naturgeschichte* [(The) Origins of Natural History],

<sup>30</sup> Gatterer, 1764: 1–345, especially 300–309, 332–333, where he describes China as a patriarchally governed, relatively well-ordered empire, more or less on par with Europe, but with a history that only became "more rich and interesting" in the second century BCE (p. 4). Cf. Gatterer, 1785–87, II: 3: "*Weltgeschichte von Cyrus, bis zur Herrschaft der Römer, Parthopser und Chineser*"; Gatterer, 1792: 629–639; Schlözer, 1772–73, I: 221–222; Schlözer, 1792–1801, I: 225–266; II: 328–340, quoting from p. 329: "*das dümmste Reich der Welt*."

<sup>31</sup> Schlözer, 1772–73, I: 212–221.

<sup>32</sup> Gatterer, 1764: 329, 441–442, 519–520.

<sup>33</sup> Schlözer, 1790: 53–59. The first edition had appeared in 1779.

<sup>34</sup> Erxleben, 1767. The dissertation concerned the criteria for classifying mammals and described several different systems (not just Aristotle's and Linnaeus' systems).

which established parallels between natural history and (human) universal history. His books were very successful, and Erxleben embarked on a meteoric career: He became a member of several learned societies, and was already full professor at Göttingen University in 1775. It is doubtful that Blumenbach would have attained a full professorship so early—in 1778—had Erxleben not died the year before at the age of 33.<sup>35</sup>

Even in the year of his death, however, Erxleben had published *A System of the Animal Realm*, and, as a devout adherent of Linnaeus, had begun it with *Homo Sapiens* and its varieties. Like Linnaeus, he distinguished between *Homo Europaeus*, *Homo Afer* [*Africanus*], *Homo Americanus* and *Homo Asiaticus*. The latter was described as mid-sized, yellow and of rigid posture, with blackish hair, small black eyes, a flat nose, thick lips, and inward-turned teeth. However, besides a black race in Africa and the Lapps in the polar regions, Erxleben also discussed a “Tatar race,” of middling size, olive-tinged, with a flat and broad face, a wrinkled forehead, small, deep, black eyes, large eyebrows, a short, thick nose, bloated chops, an acuminate, prominent chin, rather sparse beard, longer teeth, black, oily hair, thick thighs, and shorter lower legs. These people were said to live between the Himalayas and the arctic circle.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, Blumenbach’s theory of (at that time) four races—and not containing a “Ta(r)tar race”—was not only contrary to Buffon’s statements, but was also doubted within his own University by a higher-ranking colleague. His alternative was to accept a separate “Ta(r)tar race” or to somehow integrate it into one or more of his other races. External conditions for such a research project were excellent. Göttingen was situated, so to speak, between England, France and Russia. It combined a global perspective, a quantitative approach to research, and access to sources from all over the world—not least from Russian Central Asia and Siberia. Like Erxleben, Blumenbach was a great fan of travel literature. In his collected papers one can find a collection of notes on travel reports, obviously continued for many years, since the last entries look rather shaky. The volume of reports about Asia alone is 218 pages long, divided into chapters dealing with the Kalmyks, Siberia, Tartary, China etc. Often, only

<sup>35</sup> Beaucamp, 1994.

<sup>36</sup> Erxleben, 1777: 1–2: “*Mediocris, luridus, rigidus, pilis nigricantibus, oculis parvis nigris, naso depresso, labiis crassis, dentibus antrorsum versis*”; 1f.: “*Mediocris, oliuaceus, facie plana lataque, fronte rugosa, oculis parvis profundis nigris, superciliis largis, naso breui crasso, buccis tumidis, mento prominente acuminato, barba rariore, dentibus longioribus interstitiis maioribus, pilis nigris crassioribus, cruribus breuioribus. Ab Imao versus circulum articum in Asia.*”

the titles of the reports were noted, but in other cases quotations and remarks were added. The enormous amount of the polyglot Blumenbach's excerpts suggests that he actually read all these titles. In fact we know that he regularly borrowed travelogues, which were (and mostly still are) kept in the Göttingen University library. As for the reports on China and Japan contained in his list, there is little to be desired—even a sixteenth century edition of Mendoza's *Historia... de la China* or François Caron's *Beschryvinge van... Japan*, characterized by Blumenbach as a "classical little work," are among them.

Blumenbach's remarks deal with various subjects such as Chinese painting or trading with dung. Naturally, he was especially interested in reports of doctors and natural scientists and in pictures or comparisons of different peoples such as Tatars, Tunguses and others. Independently from these sections, however, there is a page within the chapter *Siberia* that is entitled *Mongol Race* in red ink. One of the reports mentioned here is some decades older than the others—Gerhard Friedrich Müller's *Collection of Russian Histories* in nine volumes published in St. Petersburg between 1732 and 1764, among which the second volume is especially indicated by Blumenbach as being "extremely important throughout."<sup>37</sup> Some books—one could not be identified—namely the three volumes of Peter Simon Pallas' *Travels through Different Provinces of the Russian Empire* were published in 1771. Most of the reports, however, dated from between 1776 and 1783—after the appearance of the first edition of Blumenbach's dissertation, the text of which had not been changed in the second edition insofar as his "second variety" is concerned. These later reports were the first volume of Pallas' *Collection of Historical Information on the Mongolian Peoples*, Georgi's *Description of All Nations of the Russian Empire*, Regnier's *Description of the Buriats*, and Pierre-Charles Levesque's *History of Different Peoples Subjected to Russian Domination*.<sup>38</sup> In other words, Blumenbach received information which helped him to revise his racial theory during the 1780's, at the very latest.

Whereas Levesque was rather bookish—a French historian who worked in St. Petersburg from 1773 to 1780—the Swiss Regnier lived in Irkutsk for some years as a teacher and Georgi was a German pharmacist and

<sup>37</sup> Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen [henceforth: SuB], Cod. Ms. hist. litt. 179 II: Blumenbach: *Litteratur der Reisebeschreibungen*, quoting from p. 48: "eine clafische kleine Schrift," 27: "durchgehends äußerst wichtig." These references concern González de Mendoza, 1595; Caron, 1648; Müller, 1732–64.

<sup>38</sup> SuB, Cod. Ms. hist. litt. 179 II: Blumenbach: *Litteratur der Reisebeschreibungen*, 27.

chemist who accompanied his compatriot, the natural scientist and geography professor Pallas, in his expeditions to Siberia since 1772.<sup>39</sup> According to Regnier, the Buriats of both sexes had broad shoulders, coarse black-brown skin, broad foreheads and faces, small, mostly black eyes and black hair. The author was sure that they stemmed from the Mongols or, to be exact, from the “Mongol Tatars who . . . are at present under Chinese rule,” meaning the Manchus.<sup>40</sup> Müller, however, had already stated that the Tatars and Turks had the same origin and differed in every respect from the Mongols and Kalmyks, who were in turn closely related.<sup>41</sup> Pallas’ *Collection* and Georgi’s *Description* clearly state that the “Tatar nations” in the proper sense were in fact Turkish tribes.

The only similarities Pallas could detect between Tatars and Mongols were their nomadism and the distant relation between their languages.<sup>42</sup> The main Asian nations—in contrast to their European counterparts—had rarely intermingled, he says. He further states the following: “But none among all peoples of Asia distinguishes itself so much as the Mongols. Apart from the[ir] color, they even form almost as strong an exception from the more common human formation of the face as do the Negroes in Africa. It is well known, that this particular formation is even noticeable in the skulls of the Kalmyks. The proper Mongols and the Buriats, however, have so many similarities with respect to these traits and [with respect to] their bodily constitution, and to their customs and economy as well, that little could be said about one nation that could not be applied to the others.” Pallas had therefore described only the Kalmyks in detail and characterized the others only by their differing attributes. According to him, the Kalmyk men were mid-sized, the women small, but well-formed, both often had thick necks, but their bodies were always slim and their limbs angular—in contrast to Kyrgyz and other Tatar nomads. The color of the skin is described as “by nature still rather white; at least all small children have this color.” The fact that the male sex exposed itself more or less nakedly to the sun and the smoke in their yurts, however, caused

<sup>39</sup> Somov, 2002: 275–294; [Regnier], 1780: 119–180, here *Vorerinnerung des Herausgebers*; Liliencron (ed.), 1875–1912, vol. VIII, 1878: 713–4; vol. XXV, 1887: 81–98.

<sup>40</sup> [Regnier], 1780: 141, quotation 121: “*Mungalische Tataren, die . . . gegenwärtig unter Chinesischer Bothmäßigkeit stehen.*”

<sup>41</sup> Müller, 1732–1764, vol. II, part II: 86–88.

<sup>42</sup> Pallas, 1776–1801, I: 1–4, arguing against the French translation of the work of Abulgasi (1603–1663), who was a Turkish historian and Khan of Chiva. In fact, [Abulgasi Bahadur] 1726: 7, footnote b, had said explicitly that the Tatars were divided into three “nations”: the proper Tatars, the Kalmyks, and the Mongols. This had been an important source for the identification of Ta(r)tars and Mongols.

their normal color to become "yellow-brown." The females' body, on the other hand, "is initially very white. Among the more noble women, there are tender, white faces, too, which . . . are very similar to Chinese pictures in this respect as well as regarding the features."

Some voyagers maintained, Pallas continued, that all Kalmyk faces were extremely deformed, but that was only true for a few. Generally, he said, there were among men and women "many round, pleasant physiognomies and among the latter, beauties." Characteristic of all Mongol faces were the slightly inclined corner of the eyes, black-brown pupils, narrow, black, only slightly curved eyebrows, a small, flat nose, thick lips, a short chin with very little beard, very white and healthy teeth, projecting cheekbones, a round face and head with big, protruding ears and almost always black, very rarely brown hair. "These characteristics," Pallas casually remarked, "are often in a full harmony," although he mentioned that the Kalmyks had a beauty ideal completely opposed to the European one. The proper Mongols were said to have a few more aesthetic faces than the Kalmyks, but they had a more effeminate appearance because they had even thinner beards. This applied even more to the Buriats (and similarly for the Tunguses and North American Indians). Compared to their size, all Mongoloid peoples were lightweight, but the Buriats had small and extremely weak bodies, since their only nourishment was meat. While the Mongols were as alert and keen-witted as the Kalmyks, more cowardly, but less fraudulent and—under Chinese and Russian influence—more civilized, the Buriats were said to be "the rawest, most simple-minded, timid, and at the same time evil and bawdy people of the entire Mongoloid stirps."<sup>43</sup>

Pallas' companion Georgi confirmed the differences between the generally quite good-looking Tatars and the Mongolian peoples, though he

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<sup>43</sup> Pallas, 1776–1801, I: 97–100, 171–172, quoting from pp. 97–98: "Aber keines unter allen Völkern Asiens zeichnet sich so sehr aus, als das mongolische, ja es macht (die Farbe bey Seite gesetzt) von der gewöhnlichen, menschlichen Gesichtsbildung fast eine eben so starke Ausnahme, als die Negers in Afrika. Bekanntermaßen ist diese sonderbare Bildung selbst an den Hirnschädeln der Kalmücken gar sehr merklich. Es haben aber die eigentlichen Mongolen und die Buräten sowohl in diesen und der ganzen Leibesbeschaffenheit, als in Sitten und Oekonomie, mit jenen soviel gleichförmiges, daß wenig von der einen Nation zu sagen ist, was man nicht auch auf die andere anwenden könnte"; 98: "von Natur noch ziemlich weiß; wenigstens sind alle jungen Kinder von dieser Farbe"; "gelbbraun"; "am Leibe erst sehr weiß, ja unter den Vornehmen giebt es auch zarte, weiße Gesichter, welche . . . sowohl hierinn, als in den Zügen, chinesischen Gemälden ganz ähnlich sind"; 98–99: "viele runde, angenehme Physiognomien und unter letztern Schönheiten"; "Diese Kennzeichen sind . . . oft in einer vollkommenen Harmonie"; 172: "die größten, einfältigsten, furchtsamsten, und zugleich die übelartigsten und unflätigsten vom ganzen Mongolischen Stam [sic]."

did not deny the existence of mixtures between them. He described the Kalmyks as being angular, too, but their faces were said to be “so flat that one cannot easily confuse the skull of a Kalmyk with another.” He more or less repeated the description of the Mongolian faces given by Pallas, but characterized the natural color of their faces as “red-brown, vivid, but due to the air and neglected hygiene mostly brown-yellow . . . Women have similar faces but are very small, the skin of their faces is very fine, white and red.” The Mongols, as “the remainder of the main stirps of the Mongolian peoples over whom they had been overlords” were “even more similar to the Kalmyks regarding appearance and disposition” than the Buriats who nonetheless also looked “very Kalmyk.”<sup>44</sup> Though Georgi found many common features between the Tunguses and the Kalmyks and even said that the Tungus children had a completely Kalmyk, i.e., Mongol appearance, he stressed in a rather confusing way that the faces of the Tunguses were less flat than those of the Kalmyks and that their ears were “normal.” According to him, therefore, the Tunguses and the proper Manchus belonged to another group, the Manchurian nations.<sup>45</sup>

In many regards, including the separation between “Finnish” [“Fennique”], “Tatar,” “Manchu,” “Mongol,” and some minor nations, Levesque arrived at very similar conclusions in 1783—and he, unlike Georgi or Pallas, spoke of different “races,” including a “Mongol race” [*race Mongole*]. This race, he said, differed sensibly from all other nations in the world by their features so that if one were not to take into account the color of the skin, a Mongol would resemble a European less than a Negro. One of the main differences was the form of the skull which was much more rounded in Mongols. Consequently, the faces were extremely round, and sometimes they seemed to be of greater breadth than length. Levesque considered these people generally ugly with their seemingly half-closed eyes, flat noses, etc. For his classification, the evident “deformity of a Mongol and

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<sup>44</sup> Georgi, 1776–80, concerning the Tatars: II, 85–86, 91, 135–136, cf. 234, quotation 94: “meist hager, das Gesicht ist schmal, dessen Farbe frisch, die Nase trocken, Mund und Augen klein, letztere lebhaft, meistens schwarz, die Haare dunkelbraun, gerade und werden schon im frühen Alter weiß. Ueberhaupt sind sie wohl gebildet.” Concerning the Mongols: IV, 405: “so platt, daß man einen Kalmückenschädel mit einem andern nicht leicht verwechseln wird. Die Augen sind enge, die Augenwinkel viel flächer, als bei Europäern, die Lippen sind dick, die Nase ist eingedrückt, klein, das Kinn kurz, der Bart sehr schwach und erscheint spät; die Zähne sind schönweiß, die natürliche Gesichtsfarbe ist rothbräunlich, lebhaft, durch Luft und vernachlässigte Reinlichkeit aber meistens braungelb, die Ohren sind groß und abstehend, die Haare schwarz . . . Das Frauenzimmer ist bey ähnlicher Gesichtsbildung immer sehr klein, die Haut im Gesicht sehr fein, weiß und roth”; IV, 434, 436: “den Kalmücken an Ansehen [= Aussehen] noch ähnlicher als die Buräten”; IV, 422: “sehr kalmückisch.”

<sup>45</sup> Georgi, 1776–80: 302, 309, and very similar to Georgi, 1775, I: 247.



Kalmyk face" was decisive, not the yellow-brown skin which he ascribed—almost with the same words—to the same factors as Pallas.<sup>46</sup>

How, then, were scholars to integrate these partly congruent, but also partly contradictory new data into the racial theories developed in Göttingen? The sheer amount of information—the many different details with which each "tribe" or "nation" was described—made it necessary for a racial theorist to massively reduce the complexity of his material. This was just what the professor of philosophy Christoph Meiners (1747–1810) did, even to a large extent.<sup>47</sup> Among the Göttingen scholars, Meiners was the first to use the newly published works for his racial theory and he, not Blumenbach, was also the first to speak of a "Mongoloid race," at least if one does not stick to the term "race" and substitute "stirps" (or something like "mega-race") for it. In the introduction to his 1785 *Grundriß der Geschichte der Menschheit* [Compendium of the History of Mankind] Meiners declared that he wanted to provide a new science by combining four aspects: Firstly, the human body, insofar as it was related to the disposition of the mind and heart and insofar as it was subject to a changing appearance resulting from different foodstuffs, beverages, habitations, clothes and ornaments. Secondly, the human mind and intellectual capacities, their use and misuse; thirdly, character and customs; and fourthly, the actions and sufferings of groups of humans. One of the differences between a "Universal History" and his "History of Mankind," Meiners explained, was that a "Universal History" followed the chronological order as much as possible and dealt with those peoples and men who had effectuated many things, whereas the "History of Mankind" took its examples from every time and place and gave particular importance to the wild and barbarous peoples since they could "provide more contributions to the knowledge of the human nature." Thus, Meiners dedicated the first part of his book to the "history of the human body."<sup>48</sup>

As early as in his introduction, Meiners proudly claims that he had made an extremely important discovery, viz. that mankind consisted of two stirps, different in many respects such as eyes, hair, beard etc. These were the originally white Tatar or Caucasian stirp on the one hand and the originally brown Mongolian stirp on the other hand. The latter, Meiners

<sup>46</sup> Levesque, 1783, II, 6–8, 62, 64, 204–208, quotation 8: "*déformité d'un visage mongole ou kalmouke.*"

<sup>47</sup> Vetter, 1997.

<sup>48</sup> Meiners, 1785: "Vorrede" (not paginated). Quotations: "*zur Kenntniß der menschlichen Natur mehr Beiträge liefern*"; "*Geschichte des menschlichen Körpers.*"

contended, was “not only much more feeble in body and intellect, but also much more evil-natured and devoid of virtues.” Both stirps were subdivided into races—the Caucasians into the Celts, the Slavs, and the “Orientals” (i.e., West Asians), and the Mongolians into the proper Mongols and the Kalmyks, who differed only slightly. All East and Southeast Asians, but also the Eskimos, almost all of the indigenous peoples of America, the lower castes of India, and even many of the black Africans were said to have stemmed from the Mongol stirps.

Meiners can be rightly called one of the first racists, for he believed in the advantage of “pure blood.” Furthermore, he constructed an overt hierarchy within mankind using a (pseudo-)scientific methodology, such that the Celts were superior to the Slavs and the “Orientals,” but also that all Caucasians, even in their most degraded forms, were still superior to the best of the Mongoloids insofar as average height, strength, beauty, and not least intellect, sensitivity to beauty, chivalric behavior towards underdogs etc. were concerned. Meiners did not deny that there were individual exceptions to his rules, and he differentiated between the Buriats—allegedly the most ugly and evil men on earth, not merely among the Mongols—and the higher-ranking Japanese and Chinese. However, at one point he refers to the Chinese as being “one of the most miserable peoples of Asia,” alluding to their lack of honesty, which European merchants in particular had so often witnessed in their Chinese counterparts in Canton.<sup>49</sup> In his *History of the Female Sex* of 1788—a quite innovative subject—he spoke in general terms of the “unintelligent, uneducated, and menially minded Chinese women.”<sup>50</sup> In short, he always pronounced resolute moral judgments—something the more sober Blumenbach abhorred.

A representative of German *Popularphilosophie*, Meiners was only five years older than Blumenbach, but their relationship was rather cool.<sup>51</sup> The

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<sup>49</sup> Meiners, 1785: “Vorrede” (citation: “dass der letztere nicht nur viel schwächer von Körper und Geist, sondern auch viel übel gearteter und tugendleerer als der Kaukasische sei”), 17–79. Cf. Meiners, 1795–96, I: 242–243, where he called the Indian Pariahs “bestial men” (*viehische Menschen*), and 246, where he expresses his ideal of “pure blood.” For the image of the “fraudulent Chinese merchant” cf. Demel, 2002: 39.

<sup>50</sup> Meiners, 1788: 89: “geistlosen, ungebildeten und knechtischgesinnten [*sic*] Sinesinnen.” Since Meiners was convinced of the existence of an “oriental despotism” in East Asia, it was self-evident to him that the situation of the “more beautiful sex”—for him a measure of the degree of the civilization of every nation—could only be miserable there (*ibid.*, 83).

<sup>51</sup> There seems to have been almost no correspondence between the two colleagues. In the two volumes of Blumenbach’s correspondence up to 1785, one single letter can be found (Dougherty, 2006–07, II: letter 233). It was written by Meiners to Blumenbach on 15 January 1785 in a polite but reserved tone, which badly conceals Meiner’s anger about Blumenbach’s critique of a remark he had made in a review of Herder’s *Ideas*.



latter obviously considered Meiners to be over-productive, i.e., a superficial, loquacious author, who wrote about subjects pertaining to the natural sciences without having a profound knowledge of them. Conversely, Meiners evidently regarded Blumenbach a mere dissector lacking deeper philosophical insights.<sup>52</sup> In fact, he was also an almost fanatic reader, who, with regard to travelogues had to rely on more or less the same sources as Blumenbach or others. But he combined his sources in a much more careless way and often claimed unfounded facts if they suited his arguments and ignored others which did not.<sup>53</sup> For example, he did not hesitate to identify the Mongolians with the antique Massagetes and with the ancient Huns,<sup>54</sup> whereas Blumenbach normally limited himself to modern sources and critically questioned their reliability.<sup>55</sup>

This does not mean that Meiners did not adduce explicit evidence for his theses at all—on the contrary. But his references sometimes contain contradicting observations or do not actually prove the point the author had made. To give just one example: In his *Observations*, Meiners stated: "Though the eyes of the Mongoloid peoples are very different with regard to their color, size, and position, they will—in spite of all these differences—never be similar to those of the Caucasoid nations." In the footnote, Meiners concedes that "even the Caucasian peoples . . . , the Siberian

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<sup>52</sup> Dougherty, 1990, depicts the conflict between Blumenbach and Meiners, which broke out in public in 1790. Nonetheless Meiners, 1811–15, I: xiii, claims that he had recognized "*daß die Farbe, nach welcher man das menschliche Geschlecht in Varietäten einteile, nur Ein, und zwar eins der am wenigsten zuverlässigen Unterschiedungs=Zeichen von Völkern sey: dass viele andere und zuverlässigere Merkmale nicht nur in den Beschaffenheiten des Körpers und seiner vornehmsten Theile, sondern auch in der Beschaffenheit des Geistes und des Gemüths: also auch in allen den Eigenthümlichkeiten, wodurch die Menschen sich von den übrigen Thieren auszeichnen . . . [zu finden seien]*" ["that [skin] color, due to which humanity is divided into varieties, is only one, and, to be exact, one of the least reliable distinguishing features; that many other and more reliable features [could be found] not only in the constitutions of the body and its most noble parts, but also in the constitution of the intellect and the mind: therefore, in all peculiarities by which men distinguish themselves from other animals"]. When Meiners enumerated such domains as customs, crafts, sciences, and religions here, his implicit critique is unmistakable: A mere physician and natural scientist (like Blumenbach) never took these factors into consideration when he divided mankind into different races.

<sup>53</sup> E.g. Meiners, 1788: 92, it is said—this time without any reference—that the Javanese stemmed completely or at least for the most part from the Chinese, though many travelogues described them as a (Malay) people very different from the East Asians. Obviously, this thesis just fit Meiners' context, since he wanted to explain why both these peoples—as opposed to other East Asian or South East Asian nations—were so jealous.

<sup>54</sup> Meiners, 1785: 19.

<sup>55</sup> E.g. Blumenbach, 1830: 59, says—with regard to reports of peoples with tails and other monstrosities—"we want to forgive our dear ancestors for their kind-hearted credulity" ("*verzeihen wir der gutherzigen Leichtgläubigkeit unserer lieben Alten*").

Tatars... and the Hindus... do not have all similar eyes." Earlier in the text, however, he listed 36 as opposed to 11 references, each relating to the eyes of one particular people of the Mongoloid as opposed to the Caucasoid stirps. None of them, however, really prove his assertion that with all these differences there was never any similarity between the two stirps' eyes. Thus, the immense number of references to travelogues within his footnotes blurred rather than clarified Meiners' highly selective and partisan approach.<sup>56</sup>

Blumenbach followed the new and seemingly quite reliable travelogues concerning the Mongols in the third edition of *De... varietate* rather accurately but also used them to elaborate and strengthen his own approach. Thus, he identified Buffon's Tartars with his own Mongolians, and did the same with Leibniz's "oriental" variety. The "Mongol race," Blumenbach echoed Levesque and Pallas, had formerly been called "Tatar race" by mistake, but this term seemed vulgar and vague. It had lead to strange errors in the classification of human varieties, for Buffon and his adherents had been seduced by this notion and had erroneously transferred the national characters of the Mongols—of whom they had heard from old authors who had called them Tatars—to the real Tatars. These in fact, Blumenbach contended, belonged to the "Caucasian race." There were transitions, however: The Tatars converged with the Mongols in the Kyrgyzes and adjacent peoples in the same way as the Mongols converged with the Indians in the Tibetans and with the American Indians in the Eskimos, and in a certain way also with the Malay race in the inhabitants of the Philippines.<sup>57</sup> This shows that even Blumenbach had to ignore details conveyed by the travelogues: The scientifically trained traveler Georgi had asserted that the Kyrgyzes totally possessed the favorable appearance of the Tatars of Kazan. Moreover, as mentioned above, Pallas, Georgi, and Levesque had reported that the natural color of the Mongol skin was brownish-red or even rather

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<sup>56</sup> Vetter, 1997: 195, 207 characterizes Meiners as a superficial eclectic. Typical of this are, for example, the reviews Meiners published about travelogues on China. They show the tendency to pick up negative information about the Chinese (or to understand it in a negative sense), and to question positive news at the same time. With regard to the pictures Macartney's embassy had drawn in China, Meiners argued that they did not represent the characteristic features of the Chinese (*Göttingische Anzeigen*, 1797: 1085–1994, 2041–2056, 2057–2058, especially 2041–2042, 2056). The question is, therefore, how Meiners could really believe that he—who had probably never seen a Chinese himself—could better judge the characteristic features of this nation than those who had traveled in this country for months. A similar question could be asked concerning his claim of being able to assess the value of Chinese historical documents and works of historiography—without knowing Chinese.

<sup>57</sup> Blumenbach, 1795: 297–298.

white.<sup>58</sup> Blumenbach, however, described it as yellow or olive-tinged in 1795, though in his *Handbook* he always cautiously added that within the "Mongolian race" this only applied to most cases.<sup>59</sup>

*The Influence of Blumenbach's Collection of Skulls on the Racial Debate*

In contrast to Meiners, however, Blumenbach did not rely solely on travel reports. As far as he was concerned, his collection of skulls was at least as important, and he was extremely proud of it. Among his friends, he not only counted Lichtenberg, but also the Dutchman Petrus [Pieter] Camper, who may be called the first "craniometrist," the traveler and natural scientist Georg Forster, and the anatomist Samuel Thomas Soemmerring. To characterize their relations, but also Blumenbach's interests, one may quote what he wrote to Soemmerring, then in Kassel, in 1781: "You cannot imagine, my dearest, best friend, what an exciting delight you provided for me with the excellent head—it was to me, Lord only knows, the most pleasant surprise in the world."<sup>60</sup> The background was that one of the first tasks of the young professor was to arrange the collection of "natural objects" his university had inherited some years earlier.<sup>61</sup> This collection became increasingly larger during Blumenbach's lifetime. This was largely due to the donations made by Georg von Asch, who, as a later catalogue of manuscripts states, died in 1807 as state councilor and first physician of the Russian army. He "endowed the collections of the University of Göttingen with magnificent donations of all kinds—more than any other person. The Mecklenburg chamberlain v[on] Oertzen wrote to [the Göttingen professor] Heyne in 1801: 'This man lives only for the Göttingen academy' " (which was tightly connected with the University).<sup>62</sup>

Asch's donations, therefore, obviously formed a large part of Blumenbach's collection of skeletons and skulls (or parts of skulls). By 1793, his catalogue enumerated 72 objects. There were two Jews, one Dutchman, one Venetian, one Lombard, one Italian, one Frenchman, two gypsies, etc.—14 skulls altogether came from non-Russian European countries. Three

<sup>58</sup> Georgi, 1776–80, I: 202. Cf. footnotes 43, 44, 46.

<sup>59</sup> Blumenbach, 1779: 63: "*meist gelbbraun*"; Blumenbach, 1797: 61–62: "*meist waizen-gelb*."

<sup>60</sup> Blumenbach to Soemmerring, Göttingen, 24 March 1781, in Dougherty, 2006–07, I, letter 145: 226. For the importance of collections of skulls cf. Dietz and Nutz (2005): 51–61.

<sup>61</sup> Marx, 1840: 6.

<sup>62</sup> [Anonymous], 1894: 22.

more Jewish skulls arrived during the same year, and, in addition, Baron Asch also sent him “the ravishing beautifully proportioned skull of a female Georgian”<sup>63</sup>—which Blumenbach reproduced several times.<sup>64</sup> It was this skull that obviously provided him with the most important reason for why he called his “first variety” “Caucasian” in the third edition of *De . . . Varietate*, and for why he believed that this region was the cradle of mankind.<sup>65</sup> When compared with the amount of European objects, an almost equal number of Africans, Americans (Amerindians) and Polynesians were represented. At least 40 skeletons or skulls, however, came from Russia, not merely from Russians but also, inter alia, from six “Tatars” and seven “Kalmyks.” At that time, Blumenbach’s “prototypical skull” for the “Mongolian race” was the skull of a “reindeer Tungus” which he had received from Baron Asch.<sup>66</sup>

However, Blumenbach never seems to have had a skull from a Japanese or a Korean. In 1794 a “skull of an 88-year-old Chinese Tungus or ‘Daurian’ [i.e., trans-Baikal] Tungus from the Amur region” was added to his collection,<sup>67</sup> and in his 1828 catalogue, he mentions the skull of a “hybrid Chinese woman,” whose father was Chinese, but whose mother was Malay—the skull was sent from Java.<sup>68</sup> These were probably the two “Chinese” skulls mentioned in an index printed after 1795.<sup>69</sup> But a scientist like Blumenbach, who—in comparison with other scholars of his time—was an extreme empiricist,<sup>70</sup> would not have built his division of races on these alone. From his point of view, the best criterion would have been the face. It is true that he opposed Lavater, for example, by saying:

<sup>63</sup> SuB, Cod. Ms. Blumenbach 1, I, quoting: “Der bildschön proportionierte Schedel einer Georgierin, durch Bar. Asch 1793.”

<sup>64</sup> Cf. the printed *Index supellectilis anthropologicae auctoris*, XXIII, in SuB Cod. Ms. Blumenbach 1, III.

<sup>65</sup> Blumenbach, 1795: 303–304, 120.

<sup>66</sup> SuB, Cod. Ms. Blumenbach, 1, II, 2: “Musterschedel nach den 5 Hauptrassen . . . b) von der Mongolischen: . . . der Schedel eines Rehtier-Tungusen . . . an Bar. Asch gesandt. 1792.”

<sup>67</sup> SuB, Cod. Ms. Blumenbach 1, I, quoting: “Schedel eines 88 jährigen Sinesischen oder Daurischen Tungusen vom Amur.” *Daurisch* is an old German expression for the trans-Baikal region, derived from the Tunguse tribe name *Dauri*. Brockhaus’ *Conversations-Lexikon*, 1886: 798, s.v. “Transbaikalien.”

<sup>68</sup> Blumenbach, 1828: 9: “*Feminae Sinensis hybridae*.” Evidently this woman is referred to in a note found in SuB Cod. Ms. Blumenbach 9 (IX a), saying (with reference to Thunberg): “da aus China gar keine Frauenspersonen weggehen oder ausgeführt werden dürfen, so sind die hier [auf Java] vorhandene Chineser genöthigt, Javanische Weiber zu nehmen.”

<sup>69</sup> *Index supellectilis anthropologicae auctoris*, No. 80a, after XXXIV, in SuB Cod. Ms. Blumenbach 1, III. One of these two skulls had been sent to Blumenbach by a Batavian physician, perhaps the one mentioned above.

<sup>70</sup> This trait is emphasized by Kleinschmidt, 1955: 329.

"...how endlessly the nose varies with prudent and stupid people!" He even doubted the importance of the "facial line" constructed by his friend Camper. However, in this context he also remarked: "The characteristic trait... of the formation of nations in mankind and whole races cannot be found in the profile, but in the full face."<sup>71</sup> His problem, however, was that he was never able to measure enough "full faces" from all over the world. He therefore had to rely on skulls. This was not too bad as far as he was concerned, since he considered the skull to be the most important part of the body,<sup>72</sup> and hence one that could furnish the main criterion for such a classification.

While Blumenbach's dissertation (which had to be defended in a disputation) can be seen as a "trial balloon," one fact which has to be considered with regard to the later editions is that textbooks written by professors at that time were often used in their lectures, meaning that the professor read and commented on his own text. This explains why the papers of Blumenbach, Meiners and other scholars contain personal copies of their books with extensive handwritten supplements. Evidently, these supplements—often consisting of a mass of short notes—were used as *aides-mémoire* and might have been added to later editions.<sup>73</sup> However, texts are one thing and objects and illustrations are another. The eighteenth century saw the development of a new culture of verification: a book on biological matters could generate more confidence when it used illustrations. That was the advantage an anatomist like Blumenbach had when compared with a philosopher like Meiners.

As mentioned above, Blumenbach had no "genuine" East Asian skulls at his disposal he could use for demonstrations to his students or to his readership. On the other hand, he had no problems showing the characteristics of Mongolians since he possessed a growing number of "Mongolian" skulls. Moreover, due to his foreign connections, there was no lack of other visual objects either. His papers include a volume containing hand-written supplements to the third edition of *De... varietate*, among which are references to pictures showing members of the different races.

<sup>71</sup> SuB Cod. Blumenbach 11, clued-in momo after p. 20: "... und wie endlos variiert die Nase bei Klugen und Dummen!" Other memo *ibid.*: "Das charakteristische... der Nachbildung liegt bei Menschen, ganzen Raßen gar nicht im Profil, sond[ern] im Vollgesicht".

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Blumenbach, 1824: 11: "Zuvörderst nun vom Schedel der Säugetiere, als dessen Bildung überhaupt den bedeutendsten größten Bezug auf die ganze thierische Oekonomie hat; namentlich als Behälter des Gehirns, der mehrsten Sinnorgane, und der Fresswerkzeuge."

<sup>73</sup> This is evident, for Blumenbach, from his personal copy of his *Handbuch der vergleichenden Anatomie*: SuB Cod. Ms. Blumenbach 11 with its many supplements—partly in the form of glued-in personal notes or letters from other scholars.

Since Blumenbach's five races were already fixed by then, finding suitable pictures was not difficult. For the Caucasians, for example, he references a drawing of a Turk made by the Berlin engraver Chodowiecki and a picture of an Indian woman painted by an Indian painter which Blumenbach acquired in London. The Mongoloids were represented by the ex-*Nawab* of Bengal, the late Mogul emperor's wife, the self-portrait of a Kalmyk (a gift from a British secret society), a pair of Chinese seamen painted in Vienna and two Eskimos painted in London. Several copperplate engravings are also described, showing—for the Mongoloid race—two Lapp women, a "Mongolian in the proper sense" who was, as the handwritten addendum explained—a lama from the family of the Dalai Lama, the Kangxi emperor (most probably from Joachim Bouvet's book), a Chinese man depicted in John Barrow's report, and four people from the Pacific region engraved during James Cook's last voyage.<sup>74</sup>

*Further Discussions on the "Mongoloid Race" by Meiners and Blumenbach*

It cannot be said, however, that Blumenbach was especially interested in his "Mongol race." He was seemingly more concerned with the "Negro race," about which he collected a large amount of information, including data relating to beautiful or well-educated men and to black people who did not possess the "usual" physiognomy.<sup>75</sup> After all, the extraordinary cases and transitions were apparently of more interest to him than the "typical" ones.<sup>76</sup> Meiners, on the other hand, gave more attention to a sharp differentiation between races and he had a special interest in Asia, since he believed that the best proofs for his racial theory could be found there. As early as 1778, Meiners had published a translation—not his own, but richly annotated by himself—of a part of the *Mémoires* on China written by French (Ex-) Jesuits. He wanted to assess the "value and

<sup>74</sup> "Porträtmäßige Abbildungen fremder Völkerschaften außerhalb des christlichen Europa in einzelnen Kupferstichen," 21: "ein eigentlicher Mongole." In SUB Cod. Ms. Blumenbach 1, III. In SuB Cod. Ms. Blumenbach 1, IV a "Catalogus meiner Schedelsammlung und des übrigen dazu gehörigen anthropologischen Apparats. 1817" can be found. It still contains (p. 3) the five "protypical skulls" of the five races depicted in *ibid.* 1, II, 2–15, but shows also "mid-races" and "transitions." Moreover, the number of pictures, including those portraying the "Mongoloid race," has been increased, among others by a Lapp, an inhabitant of Kamtschatka, and representatives of peoples living in the polar region.

<sup>75</sup> SuB Cod. Ms. Blumenbach g: IX b.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. SuB Cod. Ms. Blumenbach g: IX c and d. Here Blumenbach collected more information on extremely big or fat people than on American Indians.

degradation of the Chinese nation," and thought he could disprove the Sinophile authors' claims "from their own reports."<sup>77</sup> In 1795–96 he published the two volumes of his *Observations . . . on the Most Distinguished Countries in Asia*. They represented an attempt to corroborate his racial theory using further information and arguments.<sup>78</sup> Thus, he affirmed, for example, that "Mongolia," a rather poor region, identified with the East Asian highlands, was the cradle of the "Mongoloid stirps," which were not solely depicted with the features mentioned above. The Mongoloid peoples had not only smaller, but also weaker bodies, Meiners asserted, and this was proved by their averseness and lack of ability to work hard, their natural cowardliness, and their extraordinary excitability. In other words, he once again combined the weakness and evilness of the Buriats described by Pallas and the ugliness of the Mongols and Kalmyks noted by Levesque, and generalized these traits to be characteristics of his "Mongoloid stirps."<sup>79</sup>

In his *Enquiries Concerning the Differences of Human Natures . . . in Asia*, published posthumously from 1811 to 1815, Meiners explicitly stressed that bodily criteria were insufficient for a classification of races. Rather, the nature of the intellect and the mind, and therefore the non-animalistic attributes of mankind, such as clothes, customs, laws, arts and sciences, languages, religions etc. had also to be taken into account. Meiners confessed to having pondered the idea suggesting that the Caucasians and the Mongoloids had no common ancestor, but ended up discarding it. The Mongoloid stirps, therefore, had to be an "embodiment of anomalies caused by the influence of negative physical conditions." Meiners also stated that his *History of Mankind* had been the textbook for lectures given in various universities. The French Revolution had "impeded these initial auspicious successes" by suggesting that all men were equal by nature and that differences "only resulted from the diversity of the constitution and other moral causes." People did not listen any more, Meiners complained, when he had proved the natural inferiority of Negroes or Americans compared to the Europeans, when he had defended the rights of the nobility and even when he had opposed the sudden abolition of slavery.

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<sup>77</sup> Meiners, 1778: "Vorrede": "Werth und Unwerth der Sinischen Nation"; "fast immer durch deren eigene Zeugnisse." The *Abhandlungen* were a translation of a part of the *Mémoires*, 1776–1791.

<sup>78</sup> Meiners, 1795–96, I: 240–246, for example, tried to prove that the separation of the two higher and the two lower castes (and the Pariahs) in India was based on a racial differentiation.

<sup>79</sup> Meiners, 1795–96, I: 389; II: 1–3.



He further complained that Forster in particular had attacked him. He, however, had avoided controversies and had continued publishing in order to make truth silently take effect, and in the meantime could once more note a positive resonance for his theories—even among English and French travelers.<sup>80</sup>

In this book, which he considered the apogee of his scientific endeavors, Meiners did little more than enlarge his racial theory and back it up with new details gathered from travelogues and interpreted in his usual prejudiced manner.<sup>81</sup> Contradictions to his general statements, such as the fact that the allegedly cowardly Mongols had once ruled the largest empire in world history were explained by the actions of a Caucasoid people—in this case the conquests of their allies, the courageous Tatars. His approach to “exceptions” was the same. For example, when reliable authors such as Müller or Georgi had spoken of white Kalmyks he argued that these were in fact Tatar-Kalmyk hybrids. If something did not fit his theories, Meiners explained it away with migrations or “mongrelization.”<sup>82</sup> He even constructed a “hierarchy of humanity” with the South African Bushmen, the Papuans and others on the bottom and the Finnish people on the first step above them. The Mongolian nomads were said to have “comparatively less feeble and effeminate bodies; nor are they as piggish and cowardly as the Finns.” But, of course, since they were only standing on the second step of the ladder of humanity, they were still a far cry from the beautiful white Caucasoid nations of Europe.<sup>83</sup>

Blumenbach, on the other hand, in his *Contributions towards Natural History*, published at the same time, argued that each of his main races encompassed “one and other people, which distinguish themselves by

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<sup>80</sup> Meiners, 1811–15, I: xii–xxiii (Meiners’ preface), quoting from xvi: “*Inbegriff von Abarten, die durch den Einfluß nachtheiliger physischer Ursachen hervorgebracht werden*”; xviii: “*ersten glücklichen Erfolge... gehemmt*”; “*bloß von der Verschiedenheit der Verfassung und anderer moralischen Ursachen herrührten*.”

<sup>81</sup> Meiners, 1811–15, II: 68, for example, states that the Buriats were very similar to the Mongols and the Kalmyks with regard to their facial features. Thus, Meiners continues, it is possible to adopt what Pallas had said of the weakness and light weight of the Buriats for the Kalmyks and the Mongols without hesitation. What facial features should have to do with weight remains Meiners’ secret, and furthermore why these characteristics should be true for all nations of the “Mongoloid race.” In the same book, vol. II, 174, he asserts that most of the European travelers could not eat any of the many dishes the Chinese had served them. His only source here is La Loubère, who never was in China. Moreover, Meiners had to ignore many reports to the contrary.

<sup>82</sup> Meiners, 1811–15, II: 60–63, 71–72, 196–205.

<sup>83</sup> Meiners, 1811–15, II, part III: 131–133, 138, 162, quoting from p. 133: “*so schwache und weibische Körper: sind auch nicht ganz so säuisch und feige wie die Finnen*.”



developing conspicuously apparent differences from other members of the same division. Thus the Hindus might be considered a particular subspecies of the Caucasian [race] and the Chinese and the Japanese of... the Mongolian one." This statement is still repeated in the 12th edition of his *Handbook of Natural History* published in 1830, which shows that he now evidently considered the Mongols to be the prototype of his "Mongolian race" and that the East Asians had moved from the center of his former "second variety" to its periphery.<sup>84</sup> The number of editions suggest that Blumenbach, who still taught at his University until 1835 and died five years later, was increasingly being viewed as an authority in the field of anthropology. It was almost certainly due to him that the "Mongoloid race," as one of five or at least three "main races," found a fixed place in scientific literature until fairly recently.<sup>85</sup> However, Meiners, who died in 1810, also seems to have influenced later developments. His claim suggesting that the "better-formed" races had used their natural advantages to displace inferior races from their original homelands,<sup>86</sup> indicates a tendency which was fully developed in later theories of Social Darwinism. It is possible that he—and many travelogues published during the nineteenth century<sup>87</sup>—contributed more than Blumenbach to the fact that "Mongoloid" is not only the term for a human "race," but also the colloquial term for a genetic defect—a kind of "degeneration" as Meiners would have probably claimed.<sup>88</sup> The most surprising fact, however, is that this term is still in use, though, as C. Loring Brace remarked in 2005: "Mongols... are the least typical samples of East Asia. 'Mongoloid,' then, is not a good way to characterize the cluster of Asian people."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Blumenbach, 1830: 57, footnote: "*Jede dieser fünf Haupt=Rassen begreift... ein und das andere Volk, das sich durch seine Bildung mehr oder minder von den übrigen derselben Abtheilung auszeichnet. Und so könnten z. B. die Hindus von der Caucasischen, die Schinesen und Japaner von der Mongolischen... als eigene Unterarten abgesondert werden.*" *Beytr. zur Naturgesch. 1. Th. S. 75 der 2ten Ausg.*" This addition dates from 1811.

<sup>85</sup> *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1989) states apodictically in I: 925, s.v. "Mongoloid": "Anthropol. of, pertaining to, or characteristic of a racial division of mankind marked by yellowish complexion, prominent cheek bones, epicanthic folds about the eyes, and including the Mongols, Manchus, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Annamese, Siamese, Burmese, Tibetans, and, to some extent, the Eskimos and the American Indians."

<sup>86</sup> Meiners, 1811–15, I: 309.

<sup>87</sup> E.g. Jacobs, 1995: 205.

<sup>88</sup> Dougherty, 2006–07, I: 94–95, states that Meiners exerted a strong influence in the field of cultural history, especially in France. It is true that Gobineau, for example, took over Meiners' negative image of the "Mongolians." Cf. Demel, 1992a: 660–661. Keevak (2011: 113) states that the term "Mongolism" was coined in England in 1866.

<sup>89</sup> Brace, 2005: 18.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### BETWEEN CONTEMPT AND FEAR: WESTERN RACIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF EAST ASIANS SINCE 1800

Rotem Kowner

Linnaeus, Buffon, Kant, Blumenbach and many other great luminaries of modern racial thought lived and worked in the eighteenth century. It was indeed a seminal period in the construction of European racial outlook, and as the two previous chapters demonstrate, East Asians did not escape this development. Comprising a large segment of mankind and seen largely as a single group, they were an integral part of a new racial taxonomy and hierarchy that materialized in the final decades of that century. No wonder then, that by 1800 East Asians were perceived and described in completely different terms than a century earlier. And yet, if at the beginning of this period very few Europeans could recognize an East Asian, little of this picture changed towards its end. It was only during the late nineteenth century when Chinese and Japanese became a relatively common sight in the West, and especially in the Western imagination. Their visibility was associated with greater animosity. It was chiefly after 1800 that East Asians became the target of blatant racism and were denigrated as inherently inferior. Finally, during this period, the twentieth century in particular, even the geographical center of the discourse on East Asians transformed. It moved westward and American scholars came to be at least as important as their European colleagues in constructing racial images of these people.

In terms of broad racial division and taxonomy, after 1800 Western scholars began to share a virtual consensus concerning the unity of East Asians. These scholars remained at odds with each other regarding the number of races mankind is divided into. Nor did they agree necessarily about the sub-division of the large race which was said to be living in East Asia or about the names with which these sub-groups should be referred to. However, none of them suggested thereafter that the groups inhabiting this region did not belong to the same single large 'stock' or 'race.' In his monumental *Le Règne animal* (1817, 2nd ed. 1828) the great French anatomist and zoologist Baron Georges Cuvier (1769–1832), for example, considered East Asians to comprise the bulk of the Mongolian race which he

divided into three branches. The first branch consisted of the Chinese—"the earliest and most civilized branch not only of this race... but of all the nations upon earth." The second branch consisted of the Japanese, Koreans, Manchus, and "nearly all the hordes which extend to the north-east of Siberia," whereas the Tartars and Kalmyks formed the third branch (see Fig. 4.1).<sup>1</sup>

On the other side of the Channel, the physician and ethnologist James Cowles Prichard (1786–1848), Britain's foremost writer on race during this period, held a similar perspective. Although he initially had certain misgivings about the affinity between the peoples of East Asia, the final edition of his colossal *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind* (1813, 3rd ed. 1836–47) maintains that the Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese belong to the same large racial group or family as their neighbors despite their linguistic differences.<sup>2</sup> "If we regard their physical characteristics," Prichard noted, "one sort or stock of people, no human races bear a stronger resemblance... They all have the same physical type."<sup>3</sup> By the late nineteenth century, views of the affinity between the various types of East Asians remained firm. Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919), Germany's leading naturalist at this period may serve as a case in point. In the eighth edition of his popular book *History of Creation* (1889), he divided mankind into four large groups and further divided these into 12 species and 36 races. Haeckel referred to East Asians as the Euthycomi (stiff haired) group, and, more specifically, labeled them *Homo Mongulus* (Mongolian man). Their color, he specified, is always distinguished by a yellow tone, "sometimes a light pea green, or even white, sometimes a darker brownish yellow."<sup>4</sup>

By the turn of the century there seemed to be a consensus regarding the close ties between East Asians. The Irish anthropologist Augustus Henry Keane (1833–1912), who served as the vice-president of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, shared this outlook with a slight variation. He considered all East Asians to be Mongols. In his *Man: Past and Present* (1899), Keane divided them into southern Mongolians (Chinese) and northern Mongolians (Japanese and Koreans). In a short introduction to each racial category, he referred to the temperament of these two strains, displaying the lingering effect of Linnaeus' initial characterization of each race in the tenth edition of his *Systema naturae*

<sup>1</sup> Cuvier, 1831, I: 54.

<sup>2</sup> Prichard, 1851–60, IV: 612–613.

<sup>3</sup> Prichard, 1851–60, IV: 528.

<sup>4</sup> Haeckel, 1889; Haeckel, 1899, II: 416.

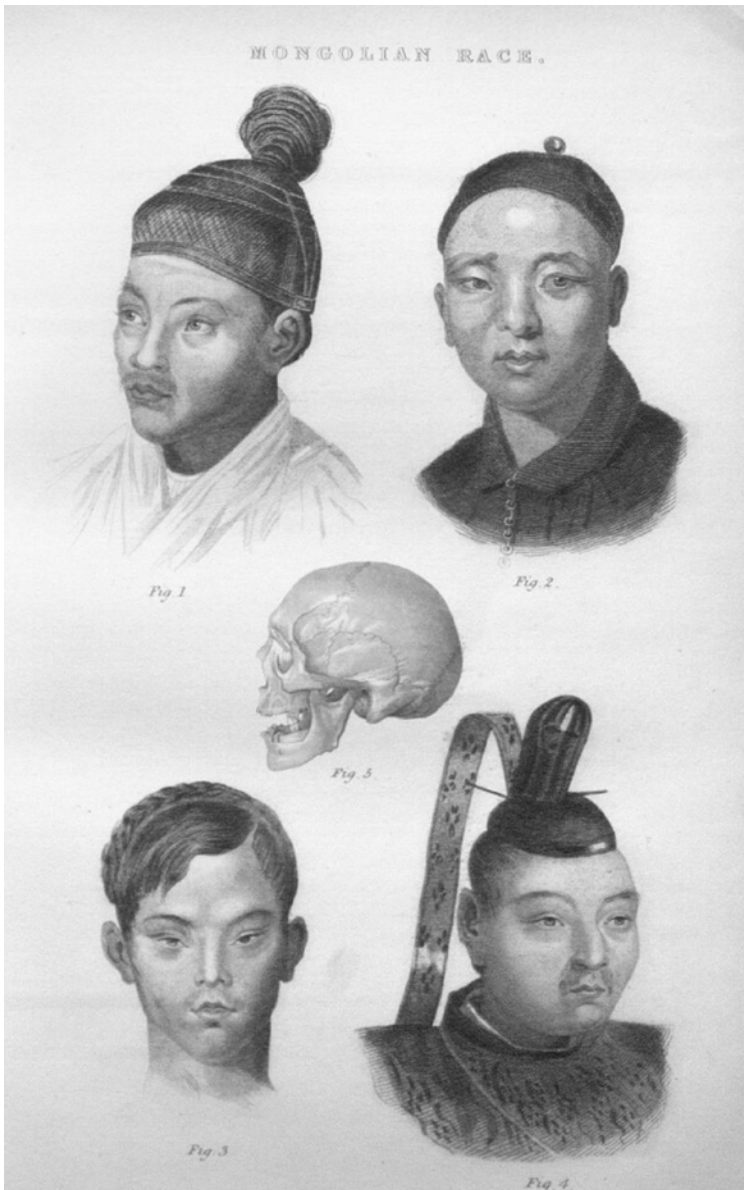


Fig. 4.1. Members of Georges Cuvier's "Mongolian Race" (1830s):  
(1) Korean (2) Chinese (3) Siamese (4) Japanese.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> These portraits appeared in various editions of Cuvier's *Animal Kingdom* since the 1830s. This specific figure is from Cuvier, 1851: 50–51.

some 140 years earlier. The southern strain, this *fin-de-siècle* scholar maintained, is “somewhat sluggish, with little initiative, but great endurance, cunning rather than intelligent, generally thrifty and industrious,” whereas as the northern strain is “dull, reserved, somewhat sullen and apathetic.”<sup>6</sup> On the eve of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05), scholars no longer suggested any substantial distinction between the peoples of the “Mongoloid race,” and the Chinese and Japanese in particular. As a whole, the skin color of this race, wrote Britain’s foremost anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917) in the 1904 edition of his seminal text *Anthropology*, is

brownish-yellow, their hair of head black, coarse, and long, but face-hair scanty. Their skull is characterized by breadth, projection of cheek-bones, and forward position of the outer edge of the orbits, which, as well as the slightness of brow-ridges, the slanting aperture of the eyes, and the snub-nose.<sup>7</sup>

This generalization did not prevent other early-twentieth century publications from offering detailed descriptions of the various ethnic groups of the region, which were often accompanied by a photographic epitome of each group (see Fig. 4.2). Nevertheless, in the public imagination and that of the United States in particular, these minute ethnographic distinctions meant very little. The Chinese, Japanese and Koreans, as well as members of numerous little known minorities in the region were seen invariably as members of a single large mass, whether ‘Orientals,’ ‘Mongols,’ the ‘Yellow race,’ or worse—‘Chinamen,’ ‘Japs,’ and ‘chinks.’<sup>8</sup> So strong was this all-embracing identity that shortly after the outbreak of the Pacific War (1941–45) the American public required a set of tips about the differences in appearance and behavior that set Chinese and Japanese apart (see Fig. 4.3). After all, the former were now allies and the latter arch-enemies. But as the war drew to its close, these temporary differences between friends and foes were rapidly losing their meaning. In the American mind both groups were first and foremost Oriental Others. As Rudyard Kipling had poetically pronounced in a different context, “... East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet...”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Keane, 1899: 169–170, 265–266—on the southern and the northern Mongoloids, respectively.

<sup>7</sup> Tylor, 1904: 45.

<sup>8</sup> The only substantial exception were the Ainu, the indigenous population of Hokkaido and Sakhalin, who were seen in this period as an isolated group of Caucasoids, possibly of Aryan descent. See Kreiner, 1993; Kowner, 2006b.

<sup>9</sup> It is first line of the “The Ballad of East and West.” For the entire ballad, see Stedman, 1895: [Online] Available at: <http://www.bartleby.com/246/1129.html> [Accessed on 1 December 2010].





Fig. 4.2. "[East] Asiatic Types" (1914).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Asiatic types, in Beach, 1914: I.



Fig. 4.3. "How to Tell Japs from the Chinese" (1941).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Life magazine, vol. 11 (25), 22 December 1941: 81.



In other racial terms, however, post-1800 thinkers offered much elaboration on the initial concepts, extended the supposed differences between Europeans and all others to new extremes and provided new context to race in general and the East Asian race in particular. It is impossible and probably futile in such a limited survey to catalog and detail the evolution of Western racial views of East Asians since 1800. Instead, this chapter shall focus on a number of pivotal issues that shaped those constructions and led to significant political and ideological outcomes. Among them are the initial shift of power between the West and East Asia and its impact on the racial position of East Asians; the growing accessibility of East Asia and the influx of racial and anthropological research; the emergence of evolutionary theory and Social Darwinism and their impact on the racial status of East Asians; and the eventual struggle over Asia culminating in the turn from race construction to sheer racism.

*East Asia's Downfall and the Plunge of Its Racial Position*

Race and racism are affected by power, and especially by the power gap between the observer and the observed. The wider this gap is perceived to be, the greater the prospects are that the observed is considered to be inferior. It is no coincidence then that the late eighteenth century and, even more, the nineteenth century, were characterized by a shift of power from East to West and, consequently, a growing racial degradation of East Asians. That is to say, never before were Europe and its colonial offshoots so powerful and never before did the Europeans see themselves as so superior and all others as so inferior. A fleeting concept, Thomas Hobbes seems to have offered in *Leviathan* (1651) one of the most workable views of power, arguing it is one's "present means, to obtain some future apparent Good."<sup>12</sup> National power, or the power of any large group, is close to Hobbes' definition in being the capacity to coerce rather than the action *per se*. Racial discourses are also tightly associated with power. To start with, any discourse is associated with power and coercion. A discourse, as Michel Foucault has pointed out, "transmits and produces power, it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it."<sup>13</sup> Racial discourses are the epitome of the use of power and coercion. The more the concept of race evolved, the

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<sup>12</sup> Hobbes, 1991: 62.

<sup>13</sup> Foucault, 1978: 101.

more it became a means of distinction between the powerful and the weak, between *us* and *them*. Likewise, it also became a source of differentiation between power and rights, and a justification for an unequal distribution of resources and for the social domination of one group over another.

Racial discourses are also associated with power in other ways. The extent to which a group can exert power affects the way in which others perceive and assess its members and the status they assign to them. In simple terms, weakness intensifies and occasionally even generates negative value judgments of others, while strength may catalyze the opposite view. In fact, the initial perceptions of one's relative power over the Other exert a twofold effect. In the short run, they affect cognition, especially the formation of negative stereotypes of the Other, and in the long run they induce actions against it. These actions may curb its independence in a manner that reduces its image even further and reaffirms the initial stereotypes. Ultimately, power determines the place of the Other in the various hierarchical orders that characterize any human society. For these reasons, powerful groups are more inclined to produce racial discourses, and since the late eighteenth century it was the West that was mostly at the helm of producing them.

The second half of the eighteenth century was characterized by a diminishing European respect for China, whose image was projected upon the entire region. The German writer Friedrich Melchior von Grimm may serve as an example of the Chinese decline in Europe. Based on the impressions of the illustrious English captain George Anson during his voyage to China in the early 1740s and not least affected by Montesquieu's (1689–1755) highly influential *De l'Esprit des Lois* [The Spirit of the Laws] (1748), Grimm concluded as early as 1773 that in China “the most terrible despotism” prevailed. Although his statement appeared in print some several decades later, it reflected the waning admiration for the Middle Kingdom in Europe. By then, Chinese despotism, rather than its earlier benevolence, was becoming the hallmark of its image and the epitome of rising ignominy and indignity. A year after Grimm had made his remark, the Irish writer Oliver Goldsmith (1730–1774) did not hesitate to dismiss all Asians for reasons of climate and nutrition in his geographical book *An History of the Earth* (1774). “The vigor of the Asiatics,” he explained, is “in general conformable to their dress and nourishment: fed upon rice, and clothed in effeminate silk vestments, their soldiers are unable to oppose the onset of a European army.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Goldsmith, 1795, I: 371.

It was not the first time dismissive views of China came into being in Europe, but now they began to set the tone.<sup>15</sup> During this period of transition, power, even more than culture and political system, remained a central criterion in the evaluation of the Asian *Other*, and China seemed indeed to decline militarily. As early as 1660, Europe began to witness a military revolution which affected the size of its armies, the discipline of its soldiers and the control of its states. But it took at least a century, and in some cases even much longer before this revolution began to exert an influence on the European standing in relation to the major Asian powers.<sup>16</sup> The rise of European military might signified the relative decline of East Asia, that is to say, the capacity of the region to project power and deter hostility. By the mid eighteenth century, Asian nations relied on firearms in warfare with no exceptions. None, however, produced firearms at the level Europeans did, and, apparently, none was able, for various reasons, to close the technological gap that had opened with Europe in the production of reliable cast-iron cannons and flintlock muskets. Worse, lesser Asian nations became inept in Projecting of military power and were therefore more vulnerable to European mercantile imperialism. They were even unable to reproduce firearms in sufficient quality and large quantities and became dependent on the Europeans for the purchase of guns and gunpowder.<sup>17</sup>

At this point, European political power in Asia was no longer confined to narrow coastal enclaves and minor islands as it had been some two centuries earlier. Dutch control in the Indonesian archipelago was still tenuous, and while the Dutch East India Company's influence in the southern part of the Indian subcontinent was waning, the vacuum was gradually filled in by another European mercantile power. By the early eighteenth century, most of the settlements of the British East India Company in Asia had become semi-sovereign enclaves exercising a growing measure of political power. Crucially, in 1757, a small force sponsored by the British East India Company defeated the Nawab of Bengal and his French allies at the Battle of Plassey. This victory signifies the first stage of British full rule in the subcontinent. Eight years later, the company turned into a genuine territorial power like its Dutch rival in Southeast Asia, when the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II granted its representatives *diwani* rights to collect revenues

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<sup>15</sup> E.g., The Iberian view of Chinese military weakness in the late sixteenth century and the subsequent conviction of some Spaniards that it was possible to take it over with limited number of troops. See Boxer, 1969.

<sup>16</sup> For Europe's military revolution, see Parker, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Andaya, 1999: 49–50. For Edo Japan's attitude towards the usage of guns, see Lorge, 2008: 62–64.

in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.<sup>18</sup> At the time, East Asia still remained free of European colonialist expansion, but the absence of substantial military setbacks there did not prevent the region's image from deteriorating.<sup>19</sup>

It is possible to pinpoint a symbolic, albeit not single, turning point in the slow decline of East Asia in European mind.<sup>20</sup> This was the visit of a British delegation headed by George Macartney (1st Earl Macartney, 1737–1806) to the Qing court in 1792. During the audience, Macartney reported that he had refused to observe court tradition and kowtow—something which no visitor had done for thousands of years.<sup>21</sup> Although the mission failed to achieve its goal, Macartney's alleged refusal left its mark in Europe. No less important were the impressions the guest had made during the visit. A perceptive observer with earlier knowledge of Russia and India, Macartney was not blind to the merits and shortcomings of the Qing imperial system. Stagnation, a feature European thinkers had begun to associate with China only a short time earlier, was a stage backward in his eyes: "A nation that does not advance," he noted in his journal, "must retrograde, and finally fall back to barbarism and misery."<sup>22</sup> A few decades later, stagnation became almost synonymous with China, as Henry Ellis, another British delegate who accompanied Lord Amherst on his 1816 mission, summed up aptly:

China is vast in its extent, produce and population, wants energy and variety; the chill of uniformity pervades and deadens the whole: for my own part, I had rather again undergo fatigue and privations among the Bedouins of Arabia, or the Eelians of Persia, than sail along, as we may accept, in unchanging comfort on the placid waters of the imperial [grand] canal.<sup>23</sup>

Another arena in which East Asian inferiority was manifested in the nineteenth century was science and technology. The idea that China, the leading nation in the region, was lagging behind in these fields, or at least parts of them, emerged as early as the seventeenth century and was promulgated with certain ambivalence by Jesuit missionaries. They did not hesitate to use scientific knowledge as a tool for penetrating the Middle Kingdom, but at the same time sought to aggrandize Chinese

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<sup>18</sup> Bryant, 1975.

<sup>19</sup> For the decline of China's image in Europe, see Dawson, 1967; Demel, 1989, 1991.

<sup>20</sup> For the European image of East Asia, and China in particular, from the eighteenth until the mid nineteenth centuries, see Adas, 1989: 177–193; Porter, 2001; Mungello, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> For Lord Macartney's embassy and its significance, see Bickers, 1993; Hevia, 1995; Esherick, 1998. For the discrepancy between British and Chinese reports of Macartney's behavior in the court, see Demel, 1992b: 133–136.

<sup>22</sup> Macartney, 1962: 226.

<sup>23</sup> Ellis, 1817: 491.

achievement and thereby boost the prestige of their own missionary enterprise. While at the beginning of the eighteenth century China had still held an edge over Europe in many technological domains, as Joseph Needham has magisterially demonstrated, it was losing it rapidly during the Enlightenment and notably once the so-called Industrial Revolution began.<sup>24</sup> The technological advantage the West had gained was a source of pride and arrogance. In 1849, a time when steam-powered rail transport had been used for more than two decades in Great Britain, an anonymous local essayist asserted that Europeans had “succeeded in rendering almost every quality of every various form of material substance available for the purpose of utility.”<sup>25</sup> He was not far from the mark, but the crux of this and similar statements was that non-Europeans did not, and probably could not, achieve this development.

Macartney also dismissed China’s military power, remarking that two British frigates could paralyze its entire Chinese coast. One may argue with the validity of this statement, but evidently this English visitor was oblivious to the great military achievements that Qing China has gained since the late seventeenth century. During his visit to China it had the largest land army in the world and enjoyed peaceful relations with its neighbors on its own terms. Its military “stagnation” was essentially the result of its being, in Jeremy Black’s words, “a satisfied power.”<sup>26</sup> Macartney’s historical ignorance notwithstanding, his prophecy was realized earlier than he imagined. In technological and military terms, European superiority over East Asia was indeed most conspicuous at sea, both in the construction of ocean-going ships and in naval warfare. It emerged as early as the late sixteenth century, but was put to full use against China, and later Japan, only half a century after Macartney’s visit. British reports on the Chinese weakness and gradual expansion into the local market were a major catalyst of the new attempts to challenge the world order in the region in the early nineteenth century. By 1839 the weakness of China was finally laid bare when the commercial conflict known as the First Opium War (1839–42) began to unfold.

This small-scale conflict had tremendous and long-term repercussions on the relations between the West and East Asia, but initially, at least, it proved that a industrialized European nation state such as Britain could defeat a huge Asian empire at its home by using superior technology and better-trained soldiers. For China it was not the first fiasco involving

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<sup>24</sup> Needham, 1954–2008.

<sup>25</sup> An essay in the *Edinburgh Review* quoted in Adas, 1989: 214.

<sup>26</sup> Black, 2008: 110.

foreign invader, but these differences were now conceived as being innate and fundamental in a way no European could articulate a century earlier. Thereafter, British, and from the 1850s also American and Russian dealings with East Asians were increasingly aggressive and hostile.<sup>27</sup> It was only in 1846–48 that American forces assumed control of the West coast following the Oregon Treaty with Britain and the war with Mexico. In the subsequent decade, racial prejudice in the United States became well defined and it was generally believed, in Reginald Horsman's words, that "a superior American race was destined to shape the destiny of much of the world." In their outward thrust into the Pacific, Americans now expected to encounter "a variety of inferior races incapable of sharing in America's republican system and doomed to permanent subordination or extinction."<sup>28</sup> The first display of this frame of mind and destiny in East Asia was the forced opening of Japan in 1853–54 by an American naval squadron commanded by Commodore Matthew C. Perry.

More than ever before, the increasing hegemony of Europeans after 1800 over the rest of the world and East Asia in particular required an explanation. It was not merely a unidimensional military hegemony as the Mongols had achieved in the thirteenth century, but also an upper hand in scientific and technological innovation, as well as an economic dominance based on an exploitative mercantile system and on industrial expansion. The concept of race seemed to provide an all-embracing, albeit simplistic, answer to this riddle of unprecedented hegemony as well as to the social maladies and rapid transformation that characterized the era. Race, its ideologists argued, is a key to the understanding of history and a justification for the moral injustice and economic exploitation that marked European dealings with the world partly already since the onset of the Age of Discovery. Mankind now seemed to be divided into separate entities and an increasing number of authors were looking for proof, preferably scientific proof, for this separation. Several important publications of the period not only stressed a polygenist view of mankind, but also contained a more implicit notion, viz. that the gulf separating Europeans and other races was unbridgeable. Around the mid nineteenth century the crop of writings on race is astonishing: the short-lived *Ethnological Journal* (established in 1848), Charles Hamilton Smith's *Natural History of the Human Species* (1848), Robert Knox's *Races of Man* (1850), John Beddoe's *A Contri-*

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<sup>27</sup> After a relatively long status-quo in the northeast Russo-Chinese border, the Treaty of Aigun (1858) marked a watershed in Russian aspirations and in imperialist expansion in northeast Asia in the nineteenth century.

<sup>28</sup> Horsman, 1981: 6.

*bution to Scottish Ethnology* (1853), Joseph Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur L'inégalité des Races humaines* (1853–55), and Josiah Clark Nott and George Gliddon's *Types of Mankind* (1854) are only a small sample of it riches. All were explanatory in tone but also racist in an epoch-making manner.<sup>29</sup>

East Asians were not the prime concern of this mid-century vogue, but they were now unquestionably on the side of all 'Others'—the dark, inferior, and threatening non-white races. "The distinction of color between the white and dark races," wrote the Washington physician Harvey Lindsly (1804–1889) in 1839, "is not more striking than the superiority of the former in intellectual energy and character." The Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, he believed, belonged to the latter. "Although they had once achieved brilliant victories and vanquished empires," Lindsly specified, their wars were for the sake of destruction... "not to build up and enlighten."<sup>30</sup> A decade later, the Scottish anatomist Robert Knox (1791–1862) echoed the same characterization but with an apocalyptic message. The "dark race of men," in which he included East Asians, could not be taught true civilization, and therefore had slim chances of survival in the future struggle for resources.<sup>31</sup>

Not everyone saw the world through dichotomous lenses, but none of these writers on race were willing to abandon the hierarchical view in which Europeans stood at the apex. One such outlook, albeit more original and colorful than most, was the brainchild of Carl Gustav Carus (1789–1869), a versatile physician and landscape painter, as well as a leading thinker of "magic idealism" in the German-speaking world. In a book published in 1849, Carus offered a graphic treatise on the inequality of the races—a natural state of divine purpose.<sup>32</sup> Being familiar with the earlier classifications of mankind, he envisioned a cultural and evolutionary framework for humanity based on the idea that progress advances from east [*Morgenland*] to west [*Abendland*]. Following the same four varieties Blumenbach had initially coined, Carus referred to East Asians as 'eastern twilight people' ("twilight of ascent in humanity") together with the Hindus, Turks, and the Slavs.<sup>33</sup> Inferior to the daylight people of Europe—"the true pinnacle of humanity," East Asians stand slightly above

<sup>29</sup> Nott and Gliddon, 1854: 53, 77. The other books mentioned are: Smith, 1848; Knox, 1850; Beddoe, 1853; Gobineau, 1853–55.

<sup>30</sup> Lindsly, 1839: 618.

<sup>31</sup> Knox characterized the "dark races" as having inferior physical strength (in comparison "to the Saxon and Celt") and smaller brains with "generally darker" textures. In Knox, 1850: 151.

<sup>32</sup> Carus, 1849: 14–25. For the background and sources of Carus' racial thought, see Gray, *About Face*, 113–136, 151–157.

<sup>33</sup> Carus, 1849: 14–15, 82.



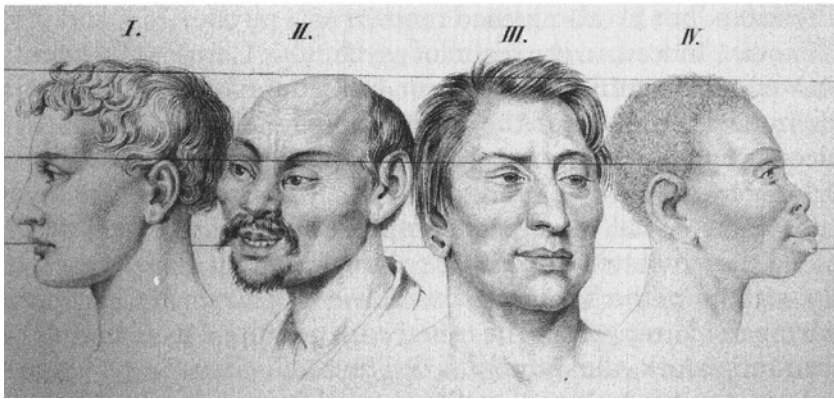


Fig. 4.4. Carl Gustav Carus' four types (from left to right): a daylight person, eastern twilight person (an East Asian), western twilight people, and night person.<sup>34</sup>

the “western twilight people” (twilight of decline) of America, who are, in turn, much above the “night people” of Africa and Oceania (see Fig. 4.4).<sup>35</sup> The eastern twilight people, Carus pointed out, are centered in the north-eastern part of the Asian continent, with China, Japan, and Tibet serving as their center point, as well as a departure point to the American continent. Their blood, he argued, is mixed with that of the daylight people and that of the night people.<sup>36</sup>

It is highly possible, as Richard Gray speculates, that these racial views were relevant to current events in Europe. After all, the book was written during the year of revolutions (also known as the Spring of Nations) that swept the continent. In arguing for inequality, Gray suggests, Carus “was probably alluding to the common belief that the social, economic, and political inequalities that incited the revolution were natural and unalterable conditions.”<sup>37</sup> Carus’ racial views, however, reflected much of the vogue of the early nineteenth century. Based on the measurements of Samuel George Morton, Carus asserted that the skull volume of the four groups is divergent, with the twilight people being the intermediary group, and concluded that their mental development is dissimilar.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Carus, 1854: 113.

<sup>35</sup> Carus, 1849: 84–85.

<sup>36</sup> Carus, 1849: 17.

<sup>37</sup> Gray, *About Face*, 123.

<sup>38</sup> Carus, 1849: 19–20. Carus remarks that Morton largely measured the skulls of lower-class people among the daylight group, hinting that the true mental differences could be even greater (p. 20).



In another book published four years later, Carus made an analogy between superior racial qualities and the sun and followed Gall in ascribing positive attributes solely to people with physiognomic features common among Europeans such as blond hair and blue eyes.<sup>39</sup> Physiognomy, nonetheless, was more than mere aesthetics. Like Camper and Cuvier before him, Carus argued that it reflected intellectual capacity. The divergent physiognomy of the daylight people, he proposed, is partly shaped by their larger brain and greater frontal lobe, the site of intelligence. Lacking in brain size and other solar-like physical traits, by contrast, the Eastern twilight people, such as the Japanese, are governed by emotions and have little more than average intellectual capacity.<sup>40</sup> With this outcome, the initially imaginative universal design Carus proposed lost its final spark of originality. Like all the other race theorists since Linnaeus, Carus too eventually resorted to a conventional hierarchy, relegating the Japanese to a second and intermediary stage of civilization.<sup>41</sup>

*East Asia's Growing Accessibility and the Rise  
of Anthropology / Scientific Racism*

The most important vehicles for promoting the idea of race in the mid nineteenth century were the various newly-established learned societies in the humanities, social sciences and certain fields in the natural sciences. Many of them regarded race as a major part in their respective disciplines and did much to promulgate it as a crucial construct. The proximity between their dates of establishment demonstrates how significant but also how contagious the interest in culture and race became at this juncture. The Société Éthnologique de Paris, the American Ethnological Society and the Ethnological Society of London were all established within four years beginning in 1839. In a slightly different order, the first anthropological society of any significance was the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris, followed by the Anthropological Society of London and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte and its Berlin branch, all founded within a decade starting in 1859. The late emergence of the discipline of anthropology notwithstanding, it

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<sup>39</sup> For the physical features related to exposure to sun and sky among 'day people,' see Carus, 1853. I used the 3rd ed. (Celle, Germany, 1925), 140.

<sup>40</sup> Carus, 1849: 18–22.

<sup>41</sup> Carus, 1849: 32–35.

rapidly displaced natural history as the arena for the study of human variety, and in the following decades had a great impact on the development of the concept of race.<sup>42</sup> Anthropology, and to a lesser extent ethnology, were associated with the imperial expansion that characterized all major Western nations. Imperialism was not the *raison d'être* of anthropology, but the relations between the two were more cooperative at this time than at any period which followed.<sup>43</sup>

More than a few members of these societies traveled to East Asia and observed the local populations closely. They were obviously not alone in promoting the new gospel of race. With the gradual opening of the region under foreign pressure, the number of visitors and sojourners there rose dramatically. In 1854, for example, the number of officials at the Dutch legation in Nagasaki did not exceed twenty, but 16 years later the Euro-American population of the Japanese treaty ports comprised 1,586 persons, almost half of them British citizens. They were mainly traders and commercial agents, but also hired professionals, missionaries, diplomats, garrison troops, and long-term travelers. By 1895, this population more than doubled to 3,227; 44 percent of them British.<sup>44</sup> In terms of ethnographic observers, the most prolific segment among those sojourners was undoubtedly the 2,400 Western employees hired by the Japanese government during the period of 1868–1900. Still, they were not the only ones to contribute to the racial discourse on Japan, since many short-term visitors such as seamen and travelers did not refrain from sharing their observations of the locals upon their return. Although there are no figures available for their exact number, some estimates suggest that about 20,000–25,000 passengers and seamen passed annually through Japanese ports on British ships alone during the 1870s, whereas in the mid-1890s as many as 80,000 Western tourists landed in Japan annually. A similar, and perhaps even greater number of visitors also frequented Chinese ports.<sup>45</sup>

The large number of travelers visiting East Asia and writing about it was facilitated by a new mode of traveling. Until the mid-nineteenth century, traveling overseas was a privilege of a tiny elite, but this was soon to change dramatically due to the emergence of traveling companies, such as that of

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<sup>42</sup> For the rise and early history of these societies, see Penniman, 1965: 91; Williams, 1985: 331–348; Blanckaert, 1988: 48–51; Staum, 2003: 126–127, 131–157.

<sup>43</sup> For the roles of early anthropology and ethnography in the expansion of modern colonialism and the rise of the nineteenth-century idea of race, see Talal, 1973; Baker, 1998; Staum, 2004.

<sup>44</sup> For these figures, see Sugiyama, 1988: 41; Jones, 1974: 305–327; Muramatsu, 1995: 21–28.

<sup>45</sup> Murphy, 2003: 34.

Thomas Cook (1808–1892). A Baptist minister with visions of democratic travel, Cook soon expanded his domestic enterprise to overseas destinations. British control of many of the world's shipping routes, progress in marine technology and decreasing traveling costs made traveling overseas even easier. Finally, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 made the journey from Europe to East Asia faster and cheaper than ever. Participating in its opening celebrations as honored guest, Cook was quick to take an advantage of the shorter passage. Three years later, his company offered a 212 day Round the World Tour, including a paddle steamer to Japan for 200 guineas (\$1,050). Not many could afford Thomas Cook's fares, but those who could added to the prestige of traveling.<sup>46</sup> Jules Verne's most celebrated book, *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1872), also promoted tours in the form Cook envisioned, especially when it was translated into English a year later.<sup>47</sup> Depicting an epic attempt to circumnavigate the globe in 80 days or less and thereby winning a wager of 20,000 pounds, more than half of Verne's plot takes place in Asian waters. The protagonists, the English gentleman Phileas Fogg and his French valet Passepartout stop in both Hong Kong and Yokohama on their way to San Francisco and provide a colorful and attractive outlook of those port cities. While Verne himself did not leave the borders of his hometown Nantes, many followed his protagonists, and *globetrotting* (a word probably dating from 1874) became a pastime of affluent Westerners.<sup>48</sup>

With easier access, the racial discourse on East Asia expanded radically. The days of restricted knowledge monopolized by a handful of (mostly Jesuit) missionaries or employees of a few trading companies were over. Now, thousands of individuals were able to observe the region firsthand and take part in a lively exchange. The discourse of race was becoming more pluralistic but also more professional and specific. During the latter half of the nineteenth century three distinct groups emerged whose members contributed to the burgeoning racial discourse. While their activity and interaction was not confined to any specific region, they were especially relevant to East Asia. The first of these groups comprised what I call "raciologists," i.e., a highly selected number of theoreticians and leaders of their respective disciplines in the West, such as Charles Darwin (1809–1882) in Great Britain, Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902) in Prussia and later Germany, and Jean Louis Armand de Quatrefages de Bréau

<sup>46</sup> For Cook's rise, see Douglas-Hamilton, 2005; Swinglehurst, 1974.

<sup>47</sup> Verne, 1873.

<sup>48</sup> For one of the earliest mentions of the term in East Asia, see Griffis, 1876, I: 339.

(1810–1892) in France. The second group comprised “specialists,” namely a limited number of professionals in several relevant fields who ventured to East Asia and studied the racial aspects of the local population, such as Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850–1935), an English independent scholar who worked for a few years as a professor of Japanese and philology at the Imperial University of Tokyo.<sup>49</sup> The third group comprised “impressionists,” namely the throng of non-professional visitors to the region, such as the American missionary Arthur Henderson Smith (1845–1932) in China, the French writer Pierre Loti (the pseudonym of Julien Viaud; 1850–1923) in Japan, and the English painter and explorer Arnold Henry Savage Landor (1865–1924) in Korea.

They contributed to the discourse on race by publishing or painting their impressions, presenting or selling their collections of ethnological artifacts, photographs, or artistic works and lecturing or taking part in discussions about their adventures back at home.<sup>50</sup> Members of these three groups maintained a kind of symbiotic coexistence that nurtured and sustained the racial discourse on East Asia. Although both raciologists and specialists believed in hierarchy, and occasionally did not sufficiently acknowledge the contribution of the impressionists, they all depended on each other and unknowingly shared a joint project. The pecking order was maintained by financial support, allocation of research tasks and sheer authority, but it did not necessarily prevent some from acting independently. Many impressionists in particular had no hand in the academic system and were oblivious to the scientific significance of their findings. These complex relations did not impede the impact of this three-tier structure on knowledge accumulation and on ideological construction. Altogether, by the late nineteenth century, the study of race in East Asian became highly developed and systematic.

The emergence of large networks designed for gathering and processing ethnographic information, as well as the growing accessibility of the region to commercial exploitation and even tourism made East Asia highly attractive for research. Several decades earlier, these very reasons accounted in part for the onset of a particularly repugnant strain of racial writings known as scientific racism. This new genre was characterized by an urge to isolate physical and mental features that could set Europeans apart from other peoples and, if possible, measure their collective dif-

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<sup>49</sup> For the encounter of specialists (naturalists) with nineteenth-century China, see Fan, 2004.

<sup>50</sup> For the impressionists' encounter with late nineteenth century Korea, see Seok's chapter in this volume.

ferences quantitatively.<sup>51</sup> Affecting the racial thinking of the early nineteenth century in Europe and North America, three pseudo-sciences stood behind this development: craniology, phrenology, and physiognomy. The cranium and the face therefore became the focal point of many studies. As early as 1800 Cuvier linked lower and higher facial angles with the domination of the senses and the intellect. Five years later, he argued that the Chinese were less advanced not merely due to “their monosyllabic and hieroglyphic language,” but also because the shape of their head “related them somewhat more than us to the animals.”<sup>52</sup> Phrenology and physiognomy did not differ greatly in emphasizing the phenotypic features of Europeans as the zenith of human development. The success of these three disciplines is closely related to the rising fascination with science, taxonomy, and the blurring of differences between social classes. However, while none of these disciplines was specifically focused on racial issues—all were seeking to classify and measure personality, character, and intelligence—their concepts were also inevitably applied to racial theories.<sup>53</sup> Their popularity did not last long. By the latter half of the nineteenth century all these pseudo-sciences were waning, but they left an unmistakable legacy on early anthropology with their preoccupation with measuring bodies regardless of individual differences and their overall scientification of the concept of race.<sup>54</sup>

East Asia did not escape the taint of scientific racism and during the 1860s it even witnessed the arrival of scholars who subscribed to this approach. Leading the quest for measuring human diversity were medical practitioners, who now filled the ranks of the recently established ethnographic and anthropological societies. The most prominent figure among these professionals, and probably the quintessential representative of late nineteenth-century specialists was the German physician Erwin

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<sup>51</sup> The best account of the principles and (faulty) methodology of a number of leading promulgators of scientific racism is probably Gould, 1981.

<sup>52</sup> Cuvier's note about the Chinese is quoted in Coleman, 1964: 166.

<sup>53</sup> For the effect of consumerism and the imitation of aristocratic fashions by the bourgeoisie and the rise of phrenology and physiognomy in early-nineteenth-century France and Britain, see Staum, 2003: 9–10.

<sup>54</sup> Racial differences found in the cranial structure were more discrete than those found in the face, but they marked the ascendancy of a new profession: the anatomist-anthropologist. Prominent among the limited group of pundits of this kind were Petrus Camper (1722–89), John Hunter (1754–1809), Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Georges Cuvier, and in later years also Robert Knox (1791–1862), Anders Retzius (1796–1860), Louis Pierre Gratiolet (1815–65) and Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902). These men felt, and at times explicitly maintained, that they alone had sufficient knowledge for measuring and determining racial differences and consequently updating Linnaeus' racial taxonomy. For a similar view, see Wheeler, 2000: 295–296.

Baelz (1849–1913). Following a chance encounter with a Japanese patient shortly after he had completed his studies at the University of Leipzig, he accepted an offer for a position as a professor at Tokyo Imperial University's school of medicine. Arriving in 1876, he began to teach pathology and internal medicine and subsequently also became the personal physician of selected members of the Japanese elite including the imperial family. Thus he was situated at the crossroads of much information on Japan and was personally acquainted with many of the leading figures in this crucial period.<sup>55</sup> Baelz, however, aspired for more. In addition to his numerous publications on medical topics, he maintained the long tradition of several earlier great German physicians such as Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716) and Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796–1866), who researched and wrote extensively about the ethnological aspects of Japan.

More than anyone else before him, Baelz's anthropological research was characterized by meticulousness and persistence. For some three decades he channeled his ethnographic curiosity to questions of racial constitution and to the origins of the people of East Asia, and ended as the single most important figure in *fin-de-siècle* racial discourse on the inhabitants of the Japan archipelago, including the Ainu. Moreover, his frequent visits to other parts of East Asia and his systematic measurements and observations of samples of various native groups made him a respected authority on the entire region.<sup>56</sup> Baelz clearly deserved his fame. He was informed about any new study on this topic and his position and connections enabled him to access public records of anthropometric measurements, as well as to conduct investigations which he presented at various scientific meetings. Tolerant towards the Other and passionate in his love for Japan, Baelz remained a German patriot throughout his long sojourn overseas, and his writings on race contain a slight, perhaps unavoidable, tinge of his *zeitgeist* concerning European superiority.<sup>57</sup> This was, however, only a faint echo of deeper prejudices at home.

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<sup>55</sup> For Baelz's life and medical work, see the preface written by his son Toku Baelz, editor's preface, in Baelz, 1932: xi–xvii, 3–4, as well as his diary which covers the period between 1876 to 1908 intermittently and appears in the above book. See also Vescovi, 1972.

<sup>56</sup> For the major studies Baelz conducted in Japan and East Asia, see Baelz, 1883, 1885, 1900. For a partial list of his publications, see Baelz, 1932: 71–72. For Baelz's contribution to the racial discourse on the Japanese, see Kowner, 2013b.

<sup>57</sup> For Baelz's condemnation of European (and particularly German) contempt towards the Japanese, see Baelz, 1932: 25, 126, 129, 134, 143, 228–229. His sense of racial superiority, however, or at least his acceptance of the Western racial *Weltanschauung*, is rather latent and can be discerned in occasional deferential descriptions of colleagues with fine

Indeed, the nineteenth century witnessed the rise of several theories that helped to consolidate East Asian racial inferiority. One of them, at least, dates back to the Dutch anatomist Petrus Camper (1722–1789), who had maintained about a century earlier that the angle of the face is a major marker of human development. Each race, according to Camper, is marked by a distinct angle; the higher the angle—which he identified among Europeans—the better.<sup>58</sup> Charles White (1728–1813) in Britain (see Fig. 4.5) and even more so Georges Cuvier and the military physician and naturalist Julien-Joseph Virey (1775–1846) in France followed Camper's footsteps and provided further evidence of human gradations based on the facial angle. The order remained constant: Europeans always stood at the apex, black Africans at the bottom, and East Asians in the middle, usually closer to Africans.<sup>59</sup> In the early nineteenth century, prognathism, another term for a low facial angle and protruding jaws, became a sign of inferiority. Prichard, for example, associated it with "a more ample extension of the organs subservient to sensation and to animal faculties."<sup>60</sup> His contemporary, the famous Swedish anatomist Anders Retzius (1796–1860), went a step further by attempting to employ the facial angle for racial classification. Earlier, he had invented the cephalic index, but it was not effective in distinguishing between higher and lower races. In 1856, however, Retzius suggested four categories for describing all human variety on the basis of his cephalic index and the facial angle. East Asians were re-classified as prognathic brachycephals (broad headed) in diametrical opposition to Europeans.<sup>61</sup>

It was only in the 1860s, however, that East Asians became the core of racial derogation. The most vicious idea in this group was the theory of recapitulation, which originated in the early decades of the nineteenth century. It postulated that an animal passes several stages in the course of its development from fertilized egg to adult that, in turn, represent the classes that rank below.<sup>62</sup> The progenitor of this theory was primarily the French anatomist and embryologist Étienne Renaud Augustin Serres (1786–1868), the holder of the chair of human anatomy and natural

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'Nordic' features, on the one hand, and his disapproving descriptions of the physique of the Japanese lower classes on the other hand.

<sup>58</sup> For Camper's definition of the facial angle, see Slotkin, 1965: 198. For Camper's contribution to the idea of race and the status of East Asians, see Meijer, 1999 and Demel, Ch. 3 in this volume.

<sup>59</sup> E.g., Virey, 1824, II: 31.

<sup>60</sup> Prichard, 1836–43, I: 113.

<sup>61</sup> See Retzius, 1950 [1856].

<sup>62</sup> Gould, 1977; Temkin, 1950.



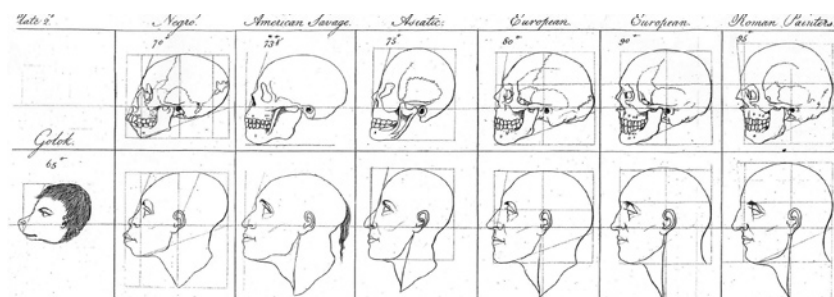


Fig. 4-5. Asians (forth column from the left) in Charles White's view of human gradations (1799).<sup>63</sup>

history of races at the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle from 1838.<sup>64</sup> In the mid 1820s Serres advanced a theory of racial hierarchy based on measures of the navel and umbilical cord in the embryo, and, with time, he became convinced that the non-white races were imperfect beings of limited developmental potential.<sup>65</sup> Based on earlier biological observations which suggested that vertebrate embryos develop gill slits that later disappear, he suggested in 1860 that higher creatures repeat inferior creatures' adult stage during their own growth. Accordingly, Serres argued, the various races of mankind are nothing but representations of particular stages in the development of the highest race, i.e., black adults resemble white children, whereas East Asian adults ("Mongolians") resemble adolescents.<sup>66</sup> "The attribution of childlike qualities to African and Asians," Michael Adas contends convincingly, "served to bolster the civilizing-mission ideology by which the Europeans justified their dominance over colonized people."<sup>67</sup> But there was more to it than that.

The theory of recapitulation had almost immediate implications for the racial status of East Asians. The most notorious of these was the distasteful association made several years later between "Mongolism" and a severe form of idiotism. John Langdon Down, an English physician who worked as the superintendent of an asylum for children with mental retardation in Surrey, observed that various forms of retardation among Europeans ("Caucasians") resembled the features of "lower" non-white peoples.<sup>68</sup> In

<sup>63</sup> Asiatic types, in Beach, 1914: I.

<sup>64</sup> For a detailed discussion of the theory of recapitulation, see Gould, 1977: 13–206.

<sup>65</sup> For Serres' career, see Blanckaert, 1997: 100–111.

<sup>66</sup> Serres, 1860: 765.

<sup>67</sup> Adas, 1989: 307.

<sup>68</sup> Down, 1866: 259–262.

an essay published in 1866, Down named infants suffering from a syndrome of mild retardation, some of whom had convoluted facial features, “Mongolian idiots” or simply “Mongoloid,” which he perceived as typically “oriental” in appearance. Remarkably, although most of Down’s race-related terminology vanished as recapitulation lost its favor, this term somehow lingered years after his death. Other recapitulationists simply sought to prove that Mongolian adults resemble normal white adolescents. They cited various “neotenous” features that characterize Mongolians, such as a relatively large head, a small and undefined nose, and a scarcity of facial hair in men and body hair in general, as proof of their theory.<sup>69</sup>

By the 1870s proponents of the Chinese exclusion in the United States were using recapitulationist ideas to stress their case. Until their adolescence, the Chinese were capable of learning, the political economist Henry George (1839–1897) conceded. But unlike the Caucasians, he argued, they could not develop any further.<sup>70</sup> In this context, we should similarly re-examine the prevalent references to the Japanese in this period as “child-like” people. Although it was not a major facet of the racial discourse on Japan, the view that the local population is “gentle, amiable, civil, gay, good-natured, and childish,” appears to have had both a strong colonial flavor and a heavy stamp of recapitulation.<sup>71</sup> With Japan’s victory over China and then over Russia in 1895 and 1905, respectively, the image of child-like people has quickly vanished. The vacuum did not last long as it was soon filled in by images of aggression and violence. The famous “father of criminology, the Italian physician Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), was undoubtedly affected by the aggression looming in the East. In the fifth edition of his *L’Uomo Delinquente* (The Criminal Man, 1876; 5th ed. 1896) he added the Mongol face, or Mongolism, as one typical features of the born criminal.<sup>72</sup> Incredibly, the association the term “Mongolian,” a plain racial insult, and this genetic pathology came under fire only in the early 1960s.<sup>73</sup> It was consequently dropped from scientific use and the pathology, or chromosomal condition, is currently known as “trisomy-21” or “Down Syndrome.”<sup>74</sup> On the whole, however, recapitulation had a

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<sup>69</sup> Curiously, several decades later, an opposing theory also called neoteny referred to many of these “inferior” characteristics as indicators of “advanced” evolution, because they showed a greater evolutionary distance from the apes. See Gould, 1977: 134–135, 358–359.

<sup>70</sup> Gossett, 1963: 290–291.

<sup>71</sup> Hübner, 1884: 221.

<sup>72</sup> Epstein, 2001: 11. On Lombroso’s theory of the “born criminal,” see Gould, 1981: 122–145.

<sup>73</sup> See, however, General Douglas MacArthur’s reference to the Japanese nation “like a boy of twelve” in his 1951 congressional testimony. In Dower, 1999: 550–552.

<sup>74</sup> See Jackson, 1999.

clear edge over craniology. It offered anatomical evidence for Mongolian inferiority vis-à-vis Caucasians, based, to paraphrase Stephen Jay Gould, “on entire bodies, not only on heads.”<sup>75</sup>

Another physical sign of racial inferiority among East Asians was the Mongolian spot. During his work in Japan, Baelz observed that local infants display certain markers that were unique, he argued, to the Mongolian race.<sup>76</sup> The most notable was his “discovery” of bluish patches and spots on the spine, buttocks and loins that may persist for the first two or three years of life. These patches, which Baelz called dark blue or blue spot [Ger. *dunkelblauer Fleck*] and later Mongolian spot [Ger. *Mongolen Fleck*] were far from an original discovery. They were well-known in Japan, but Baelz was the first to refer to them in the scientific literature, and around the turn of the century this observation became quite sensational.<sup>77</sup> A short while later, other researchers also revealed such spots among Chinese and Burmese infants, and erroneously suggested that they were characteristic of Mongolian peoples.<sup>78</sup> Much of the subsequent debate revolved around the origins of these marks. Some argued it was a racial stigmata, but the idea of atavism seemed to be far more appealing. Followers of Darwin tended to regard the rare occurrence of rudimentary tail in newborns, for example, as a case of arrested development, which in turn led to the appearance of characteristics shared with earlier and remote ancestors both human and animal. In Berlin, Virchow was also fascinated by birth defects that could be used, he feared, to support Darwinian theory. In his view, they were merely pathological.<sup>79</sup> Baelz followed Virchow’s line and dismissed the marks as representing over-pigmentation. Others, however, did not miss the link. In 1905, the American physician Albert Sidney Ashmead (1850–1911) interpreted it as an indication of the “Negro ancestry” of the Japanese, while others went further and argued it was a trace of a simian ancestor.<sup>80</sup>

If the blue spot was a sign of atavism, the ability of East Asians to withstand pain was a sign of primitivism—contemporary physiologists and

<sup>75</sup> Gould, 1981: 115.

<sup>76</sup> Baelz, 1885: 40; Baelz, 1901: 188.

<sup>77</sup> For further discussion on this discovery, its background and implications, see Kowner, 2013b.

<sup>78</sup> Later studies found these marks to be common among children of other ethnic groups albeit not as prevalently as in Northeast Asia.

<sup>79</sup> For Rudolf Virchow’s interest in congenital deformities and his view of them as pathological, see Zimmerman, 2001, 73–85.

<sup>80</sup> For the “Negro ancestry,” see Ashmead, 1905: 203. For later studies of the ‘Mongolian’ mark, see, for example, Rivet, 1910; Fink, 1912. For subsequent theories concerning the atavistic meaning of the mark, e.g., Crookshank, 1931: 139–140.

anthropologists stressed the idea that the lower an organism, the less developed is its nervous system.<sup>81</sup> The notion of East Asians' less sensitive nervous system emerged in the early seventeenth century, when Iberian visitors to Japan, mostly members of religious orders, looked with amazement mixed with admiration at the ability of local Christian martyrs to withstand torture with indifference to suffering and death.<sup>82</sup> In the late nineteenth century, however, it was the Chinese who became noted for their supposedly inhuman endurance. The trait became the focus of a literary hit, a book entitled *Chinese Characteristics* (1890). Spending 54 years in China and borrowing much from the anthropological discourse of his period, the author of this book, the missionary Arthur Henderson Smith, devoted a full chapter to "The Absence of Nerves."<sup>83</sup> The Chinese differ from other human beings, he argued, in that they have "nerves of very different sort from those with which we are familiar."<sup>84</sup> Smith based his contention on his observations that the Chinese could stand in one position all day, sleep anywhere and in any posture, and require no air, and concluded that "as compared with us, they are gifted with the 'absence of nerves.'"<sup>85</sup>

The geographical proximity, racial affinity, and samurai legacy ensured that the Japanese would be labeled as having the same inhuman trait. In a strange coincidence with Smith's book, Basil Hall Chamberlain also characterized the Japanese as nerveless in his standard work of the era, *Things Japanese* (1890). The Japanese, he stated, "have less highly strung nerves than we Europeans. Hence they endure pain more calmly, and meet death with comparative indifference."<sup>86</sup> Five years later, this trait not only grew to characterize the entire race but became a dire threat to the West. Observing the Japanese army during the Sino-Japanese War and the frugal and silently enduring Chinese, a reporter of the British Newspaper *St. James's Gazette* became alarmed. The Oriental, he noted, "with his power of retaining health under conditions

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<sup>81</sup> Harris 1968: 135.

<sup>82</sup> E.g., Vega, 1965 [1618]: 77–78.

<sup>83</sup> Smith, 1894: Ch. 5. For contemporary associations between primitivism and the ability to withstand suffering, see Harris 1968: 135.

<sup>84</sup> Smith, 1894, 90.

<sup>85</sup> Smith, 1894, 94. The idea did not languish in the twentieth century. The social worker and writer Bruno Lasker (1929: 205, 207), for example, wrote in 1929: "And there is the Chinaman, who being of a breed that has been crowded and coerced for thousands of years, seems to have done away with nerves. He will stand all day in one place without seeming in the least distressed . . . he can starve to death with supreme complacency."

<sup>86</sup> Chamberlain (1891: 230) explained in a footnote that he classed indifference to death as a physical characteristic, since "none can doubt that a less sensitive nervous system must at least tend in that direction."

under which no European could live, with his savage daring when roused, with his inborn cunning" might turn into a menace.<sup>87</sup>

*The Emergence of Evolutionary Theory and Social Darwinism*

The rise of the theory of evolution, the pinnacle of scientific thought in the latter half of the nineteenth century did much to enhance existing racial paradigms. In 1859, when Charles Darwin's revolutionary book *The Origin of Species* was published, the world's first dog show took place in Newcastle. The great variety of dog breeds was a testimony to the wonders of domestication, but it also hinted at the long-term racial diversity that might result from selective human breeding.<sup>88</sup> In the following years, the concepts of evolution and race did not only approach an unprecedented importance but also complemented each other. Darwin himself never doubted the existence of significant internal differences between the races. Although he pointed out in *The Descent of Man* (1871) that there is a continuum between humans and other organisms, he also insisted that there was a hierarchy of cultural advancement.<sup>89</sup> Towards the end of his life, Darwin showed a growing understanding of the redeemable character of human nature, but even then this enlightened and scientific celebrity—at least when compared to his contemporaries—did not change his basic belief in a cultural hierarchy. In this implicit hierarchy, noted Stephen Jay Gould, white Europeans stood "on top and natives of different colors on the bottom."<sup>90</sup>

The relevance of the idea of race to Darwin's thought can be found in many aspects of his theory, such as his idea of racial continuity. This elaboration of the old idea of the great chain of being can be interpreted as indicating, as Nancy Stepan contends, "the use of lower races to fill the gap between animals and man."<sup>91</sup> Darwin's view of the affinity between humans and apes prompted many of his disciples to apply evolutionary theory to extreme racist worldviews and to observe simian resemblances ubiquitously. German followers of Darwin were particularly inclined to draw psychological and social conclusions from biology, and treated it

<sup>87</sup> *The St. James's Gazette*, October 6, 1894; quoted in Norman, 1895: 398–399.

<sup>88</sup> For the show, see Jones, 1999: 31.

<sup>89</sup> Darwin, 1871, I: 71–80. For Darwin's intrinsic racism, see Harris, 1968: 119.

<sup>90</sup> Gould, 1993: 266. For Darwin's relevance to race and social evolution, also see Freeman, 1974 and Greene, 1977.

<sup>91</sup> Stepan, 1982: 55.

using historical concepts and moral standards rather than the concepts and standards of physical sciences. Ernst Haeckel, for example, emphasized the inequality between races more explicitly than Darwin ever did. In his seminal work *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* (1868; translated into French in 1874 and English in 1876 as *The History of Creation*), this leading promulgator of Darwinist theory in Germany argued that there is only a small quantitative difference between the most highly developed animal and the least developed human, but no qualitative difference.<sup>92</sup> Critically, Haeckel asserted that this difference is much smaller than the differences between either higher and lower humans, or higher and lower animals, and therefore urged uniting the lower humans with the animals.

Where did East Asians stand in the rising Darwinian order? Surprisingly, many contemporary racial theorists treated East Asians as fairly marginal. During much of the latter half of the nineteenth century racial discourse still focused on either the dichotomy between people of European and African ancestry (“Caucasians” vs. “Negros”), or the hierarchy among Europeans. Despite, or perhaps precisely because of their marginality, the peoples of East Asia were lumped together. Referred to as “Mongolians,” “Asians,” or simply “Chinese,” they were invariably portrayed as being below Europeans but, in line with Linnaeus and Blumenbach’s tradition, they were usually placed above all others. Their diligence as laborers, their success in trade, their civil order, and occasionally even their ability to emulate recent technologies facilitated the tendency to grant them the second place among the races. In one of the first post-Darwinian classifications, Tylor divided mankind using five “racial” representatives according to their cultural level and apparently also by the color of their skin. On the bottom of this 1871 taxonomy, he set “Australian” culture—the darkest, followed by Tahitian, Aztec, Chinese, and Italian at the top. Like many of his contemporaries, Tylor confused “race” with nation, ethnicity and even language group, but he did at least confine “race” to humans alone. This was not always the case in this period.<sup>93</sup>

Haeckel, for example, insisted on a longer chain of being. Three years before Tylor, he referred to “Asians” as the second most developed race in the human ladder, much in line with the illustration used in White’s *Account of the Regular Graduations in Man* (see Fig. 4.5). In the frontispiece of the first edition of his celebrated and voluminous *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* (1868), Haeckel displayed a series of a dozen facial

<sup>92</sup> Haeckel, 1868; Haeckel, 1876.

<sup>93</sup> Tylor, 1871, I: 27.

profiles of adult males, with an instantly recognizable racial and specie hierarchy beginning with six human profiles and ending with six simian profiles (see Fig. 4.6). In his world, the first among the human races was evidently the European, followed by the East Asian, Fuegian, Australian, black African, and Tasmanian. However, the hierarchy did not end there. Haeckel, who often mentioned the similarity between certain “primitive races,” such as Australian aborigines and Bushmen on the one end and apes on the other, also reiterated his conviction graphically. To stress this physical similarity, he carefully distorted the features of the profile representing the Tasmanian specimen—his choice for the role of the least advanced human—and made it look more apish. At the same time, he added some anthropomorphic features to the gorilla, supposedly the most advanced ape, and placed it right next to the “Tasmanian,” thereby blurring the distinction between humans and non-humans.<sup>94</sup>

Darwin was not as specific as his followers. This “father of evolution” scarcely referred to East Asians in his books and took very little interest in their lives and recent modernization. His evolutionary theory and its derivatives, nonetheless, had a strong impact on Western racial thinking in the last three decades of the nineteenth century and beyond. While Darwin was not too outspoken about the repercussions of his theory to humans, his selfless nemesis Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913) was less hesitant. A monogenist who proposed a theory of natural selection independently in 1858 and believed that mankind developed from unity, Wallace nonetheless thought that the long process of natural selection had a significant impact on the differences between the races. As a result, he contended: “The intellectual and moral, as well as the physical, qualities of the European are superior; the same powers and capacities which have made him rise in a few centuries from the condition of the wandering savage...”<sup>95</sup> Eventually, it was the English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) who became the person most associated with the scientific ideology that supported European expansion and which later became known pejoratively as Social Darwinism.<sup>96</sup> What Darwin used to speak of organisms and species, Spencer used for human races and nations. He believed that the races and nations were fighting against each other in a struggle for survival and that the fittest would justifiably win. It is often

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<sup>94</sup> Haeckel, 1868: 547.

<sup>95</sup> Wallace, in a letter to Huxley, 26 February 1864, quoted in Raby, 2002: 176–177.

<sup>96</sup> For a short introduction to this intellectual current, see Banton, 1977: 89–100.



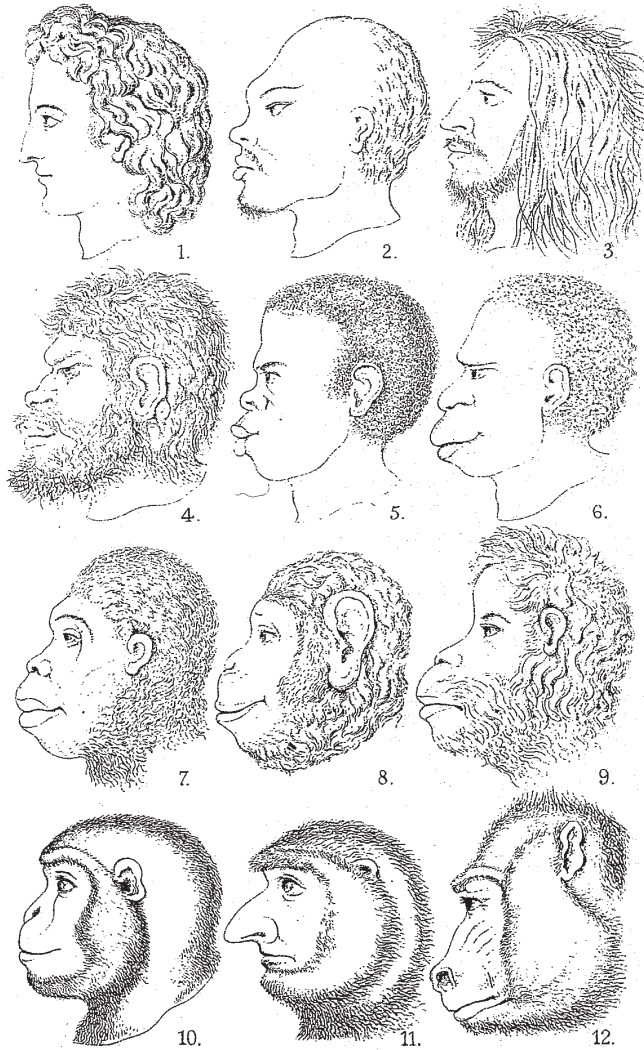


Fig. 4.6. East Asians (top row second from left) in Ernst Haeckel's view of human gradations (1868).<sup>97</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Haeckel, 1868: frontispiece.

forgotten today that Wallace held similar convictions about the future of the races. In an article published in 1864—the same year in which Spencer originally wrote his own treatise—he voiced a very pessimistic forecast for non-Europeans. “The higher—the more intellectual and moral,” he concluded, “must displace the lower and more degraded race.”<sup>98</sup> This dim forecast was not detached from reality as various groups of islanders were actually vanishing at that period.<sup>99</sup> However, Wallace did not necessarily refer only to remote groups and had little doubt concerning the identity of the higher race. It certainly did not include East Asians.<sup>100</sup>

Darwin was not oblivious to the idea of human extinction, and so were many of his followers. His elaboration on Buffon’s notion that a species can produce fertile offspring only when crossed with members of the same species provided much ammunition to those who doubted the survival of “half-caste” offspring.<sup>101</sup> A firm monogenist, Darwin believed all humans share a common ancestry, but polygenists took his ideas to extremes. They suggested that either members of different races could not produce viable offspring, or that in the case of widespread miscegenation between members of close races, say the Europeans and the East Asians, the weaker race would not survive.<sup>102</sup> Critically, the theory of evolution did not displace racial thinking—quite the opposite. After Darwin, Sven Lindqvist has contended, the issue of race “became the wholly decisive explanation in far wider circles, [and] racism was accepted and became the central element in British imperial ideology.”<sup>103</sup>

*The Struggle over Asia and the Shift from Race Constructions  
to Sheer Racism*

Power and technological advancement remained defining factors of racial standing in the twentieth century as well, but their impact on racism was more complex. By 1900, the technological and military edge Europe and North America held over the rest of the world was reaching a zenith, with one exception. A power shift was taking place in East Asia, one initially

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<sup>98</sup> Wallace, 1864: 170.

<sup>99</sup> For instances of groups vanishing at that period, see Diamond, 2005: 112. Also see Brantlinger, 2003.

<sup>100</sup> Wallace, 1864: 170.

<sup>101</sup> Darwin, 1859: Ch. 8. For the prevalence of such doubts, see Stanton, 1960: 141.

<sup>102</sup> For the discourse of vanishing races during this period, see Brantlinger, 2003.

<sup>103</sup> Lindqvist, 1996: 130.

unnoticed. In a period of the “survival of the fittest,” or rather “survival of the strongest” as Spencer’s original phrase was commonly interpreted, no success could be greater than a triumph in war. Only a few decades after the onset of its modernization, Japan accepted this notion and took it to its extreme. With its victory in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) Japan joined the imperialist race in East Asia in earnest, but during a time ruled by racial ideology, it could not assert its new position as long as it did not win a war with a Western power. The final confirmation of Japan’s regional position came exactly a decade later when it won the war with Russia—Europe’s most populated nation and the possessor of its largest army. Although the Russians, as some of their Western neighbors and rivals argued scornfully, had their own Asian blood, it was difficult to deny that the East Asians were proving themselves capable of mastering the latest technologies. By 1910 Japan has commissioned *Satsuma*, the first battleship to be designed and built domestically and unquestionably the most complex weapon system of that time. East Asians became so masterful that they regained control of their region on land and even threatened Western naval hegemony in the Pacific. The Japanese victories, first over China and then over Russia, shocked all those who spoke of the innate inferiority of East Asians and awoke atavist fears, reminiscent of the time of Mongol invasions. And yet, could this new development transform the prevailing view of the East Asian race?

It could, apparently. In times of stress and declining confidence, racial theories have a tendency to turn into sheer racism. It is no wonder that the interest in racial taxonomy was waning during the early twentieth century. In East Asia, native specialists and indigenous theories about the ethnic constitution of the region were rapidly displacing foreign expertise.<sup>104</sup> Racism, however, was anything but declining. In Europe, Germany seemed to be the most concerned about Japan’s entry into the regional struggle in northeast Asia. If one figure could be singled out among those anxious about this blatant racial aberration, it was Kaiser Wilhelm II. The trigger for his eruption took place on 17 April 1895, when Japan concluded the Treaty of Shimonoseki with China and reaped the fruits of its sensational triumph. Six days later, this erratic German monarch joined Russia and France and issued Japan with an ultimatum demanding to change the terms of the treaty. With an undeniable talent, Wilhelm sketched a picture entitled “Against the Yellow Peril” [*Gegen die gelbe Gefahr*] and by

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<sup>104</sup> For the rise of indigenous anthropological research in Japan during the late nineteenth century, see Shimizu, 1999.

April 30 commissioned his painter to produce a sharper visual representation of the danger looming from the East. Art became an extension of diplomacy. The resulting drawing depicted neither Japan nor China but a group of "warrior goddesses," representing major European nations, led by the Archangel Michael. The only symbol of the Orient was neither a representation of Japan nor of China but a Buddha looming in the distance over conflagration and carnage. Although the drawing was later distributed among the monarchs of Europe and received considerable attention, very few at the time were aware of the shift in the racial standing of East Asians and none sought to explain, apart from stressing the number of Chinese, how this supposedly inferior and remote race could be so threatening.<sup>105</sup>

Five years later, when an anti-Western uprising (known as the Boxer Rebellion) spread out in north China, eight foreign powers joined forces and began to organize a military expedition to quash the rebels.<sup>106</sup> Although the largest contingent was from Japan, Wilhelm regarded the force as a European civilizing mission. As German troops were going to embark for China, he gave another vent to his emotions against the changing racial equilibrium in the East. In his notorious "Hun speech" to the disembarking troops, the Kaiser prompted them to treat the rebels "like the Huns under their King Attila a thousand years ago, [so that] the name of Germany [shall] become known in China to such effect that no Chinaman will ever again dare so much as to look askance at a German."<sup>107</sup> Wilhelm's distress initially had little effect on Europe and no discernible impact on the newly enthroned tsar, Nicholas II, who had visited Japan as a crown prince and was reluctant to abandon his dismissive and racist views of East Asians.<sup>108</sup> Several years later, as the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) came to a close, Nicholas too could no longer deny the political and racial shift in the region. The defeat of Russia by an Asian nation obviously heightened the feeling of racial urgency. In the years before the Great War, Kaiser Wilhelm II remained in the vanguard of the racist camp and kept pointing at the threat to Christian nations and European civilization and culture posed by the Mikado's hordes. In an outburst in late 1907, he lectured no other than Tsar Nicholas II about the Japanese threat. They were "going in for the whole of Asia," he warned, "carefully preparing

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<sup>105</sup> For the original sketch and the subsequent drawing, see Röhl, 2004: 754–755. For the rise of the Yellow Peril idea, see Gollwitzer, 1962; Lyman, 2000.

<sup>106</sup> For the Boxer Rebellion and its international repercussions, see Bickers and Tiedemann, 2007; Cohen, 1997.

<sup>107</sup> Röhl, 2004: 1042–1043.

<sup>108</sup> For Tsar Nicholas II's racial views of the Japanese before the Russo-Japanese War, see Kowner, 1998.

their blows against the white race in general! Remember my picture, it's coming true!"<sup>109</sup>

Racial animosity toward East Asians also increased in the United States after the Russian fiasco. The last years of the Roosevelt administration as well as those of his successor, William Taft, were tainted by a growing racism towards Japanese and other Asian immigrants, leading to attempts to limit their entrance to the United States.<sup>110</sup> Racial hostility towards these immigrants was hardly new. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, there was a massive wave of Japanese immigration to the Hawaiian islands, where the Japanese constituted the largest Asian ethnic group. By the end of the nineteenth century, they made up one quarter of the islands' population. The United States feared that additional immigration would lead to a Japanese takeover of this newly acquired colony. Thus, the Russo-Japanese War did not instigate racial animosity but merely accentuated it. Japan's military strength, coupled with its steady course of expansion in different regions in Asia and its growing population pressures, was defined as threatening the United States' domestic economic interests. Had the Japanese been of European ancestry much of the strife would not occur.<sup>111</sup> But the American sense of racial incongruence and competition amplified communal fears and determined national policies.

The tensions between the two countries escalated with the eventual implementation of racist and xenophobic domestic policies against East Asian immigrants, especially in California. A year after the Japanese victory over Russia and despite protests from Tokyo, the San Francisco school board decided to segregate "pupils of the Mongolian race" in separate schools. In reality, the board targeted only children of Japanese ancestry (a total of 93), since those of Chinese ancestry had already been placed in segregated schools following the 1882 and 1892 exclusion acts.<sup>112</sup> In a speech to Congress, more than a decade before the Japanese war with Russia, James G. Blaine (1830–1893), Speaker of House and two-time Secretary of State, defended the decision to exclude the Chinese. Reflecting the contemporary American *zeitgeist* about East Asians, immigrants in particular, his arguments were far from exceptional:

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<sup>109</sup> Röhl, 1994: 204. For Germans' view of Japan in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War, see Seligman, 2007.

<sup>110</sup> For Roosevelt's racial attitudes towards East Asia, see Sinkler, 1972: 395–400; Henning, 2007: 162–164.

<sup>111</sup> During and after the Russo-Japanese War some Christian groups in the United States sought to persuade the public that the Japanese had European blood. See Henning, 2007.

<sup>112</sup> For school segregation in San Francisco, see Bean, 1952.

The question lies in my mind thus: either the Anglo-Saxon race will possess the Pacific slope or the Mongolians will possess it . . . The idea of comparing European immigration with an immigration that has no regard to family, that does not recognize the relation of husband and wife, that does not observe the tie of parent and child, that does not have in the slightest degree the ennobling and the civilizing influence of the hearthstone and the fireside . . .<sup>113</sup>

The prejudice against Chinese in California had relatively old roots. They were barred from testifying in court cases involving whites as early as 1854, and 25 years later, the same state denied them suffrage together with “idiots and insane persons.”<sup>114</sup> In 1906 it was the Japanese’s turn. In Washington, however, the West Coast hostility to East Asians seemed problematic if not dangerous. Fearing further rifts, President Theodore Roosevelt elected to sooth the Japanese government, but with little avail. Thereafter the diplomatic and economic relations between the two nations became more and more estranged and were characterized by increasing preparations for a future war.<sup>115</sup> From an American perspective, a conflict of a similar pattern would only re-emerge during the Cold War, and this time with the Soviet Union.<sup>116</sup> The postwar struggle would comprise very similar characteristics—an arms race and attempts to curb it, local and global alliances and treaties aiming to restrain the rival power, cultural and ideological rivalry and an abiding fear of the other—with one major difference: there was virtually no racial hostility between the two nations.

Interwar Europe was also perturbed by East Asia’s changing status and Adolf Hitler may illustrates this sentiment well. Writing his manifesto *Mein Kampf* while serving his sentence in Landsberg Prison in 1924, he was much affected by the fears of the East Asian rise during and soon after World War I and thus referred to the Japanese at length. Hitler was not moved by Japan’s newly acquired position and notably its role as one of the five founding nations of the League of Nations only five years earlier. Dividing mankind into three groups: culture founders, culture bearers, and culture destroyers, he placed the Japanese along with their racial

<sup>113</sup> Cited in Conroy and Conroy, 2008: 44–45.

<sup>114</sup> Dower, 1986: 154. For the first decades of American racism against Chinese immigrants, see Gyory, 1998. For the American contribution to the idea of a “yellow peril,” see Gollwitzer, 1962.

<sup>115</sup> Although the Russo-Japanese War was unquestionably a turning point in American-Japanese relations, Iriye (1972) has shown that some of the roots of the conflict between the two nations date back to the late 1890s.

<sup>116</sup> For this argument, see Tovy and Halevi, 2007.

brethren in the second group. Like many writers of the late eighteenth and especially the nineteenth century, Hitler was doubtful of the possibility of any cultural achievement being made outside the realm of the "Aryan race." In a few decades, he forecasted, the entire east of Asia "will call a culture its own," even though it will be of Hellenic spirit and Germanic technique. However, only its *external* form, he emphasized, will bear "the features of Asiatic character." He opposed the argument suggesting that Japan "added" European techniques to its culture, believing that European science and techniques were "trimmed" with Japanese characteristics.<sup>117</sup> As culture bearers, Hitler mused, the Japanese could only maintain the Aryan achievement. If by chance Europe and America were to perish, the Japanese development would dry out in a few years and the culture would "stiffen and fall back into the sleep out of which it was startled seven decades ago by an Aryan wave of culture." Oblivious by all likelihood to the state of the Ainu, whom Western scholars in the 1920s still considered to be early Aryan tribes who settled Japan, Hitler nonetheless seemed to be aware of contemporary ideas concerning the Aryan origins of the Japanese. The paralysis of this nation before modernization, he suggested, could only happen "to a people when the originally creative race nucleus was lost," or when external influence was lacking at a later time.<sup>118</sup>

The racial tensions between the Anglo-Saxon nations on the one hand and Japan and its continental empire on the other hand reached a climax in December 1941. This was when Japanese forces attacked American, British and Dutch bases in the Pacific and had ousted every single colonial regime from the western shores of the Pacific, except Australia and New Zealand within several months. Popular writers in the United States were not far off the mark by stating that the conflict was "a holy war, a racial war of greater significance than any the world has here forth seen."<sup>119</sup> Indeed, the war that followed was bitterly fought on both sides. Whereas the Americans were bringing to life any abominable racist images ever produced to regain the old order, the Japanese were equally determined to drive out the 'White man' from 'their' continent. On the home front, the United States arrested some 110,000 of its citizens, all of Japanese ancestry,

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<sup>117</sup> Hitler, 1939: 398.

<sup>118</sup> Hitler, 1939: 398. For overview of the impact of racial fears on German-Japanese relations, 1895–1945, see Iikura, 2006. For racial attitudes to Japan in National Socialist Germany, see Maltarich, 2005: 175–212.

<sup>119</sup> Quoted in Dower, 1986: 7.



by the summer of 1942 and incarcerated them in camps but left its citizens of German or Italian ancestry unharmed. They were probably too numerous to be interned, but numbers were not the core issue. "A Jap's a Jap," is how Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, the commanding officer of Western Defense Command and a vocal supporter of the internment, explained this rare measure, "... You can't change him by giving him a piece of paper."<sup>120</sup> In the Asian theater, as John Dower notes, "there was no Japanese counterpart to the 'good German' in the popular consciousness of the Western allies."<sup>121</sup> It was a racial war of extreme ferocity and fighting was governed by slogans such as "kill or be killed" and "no quarter, no surrender." Spencer and Wallace's old predictions were finally confirmed. Ultimately, racist images were not the major determinants of the decision to drop the first Atomic bomb over Hiroshima, but there was evidently little in the contemporary image of the Japanese to counter this inhuman decision.<sup>122</sup>

The old racial order seemed to be temporarily restored, at least for a while, with Japan's surrender in 1945. Where the fears of Japan were transformed into a revaluation of local character and at times even renewed sympathy, China became once again the focus of apprehension and demonization, especially after it fell into communist hands four years later.<sup>123</sup> For most Westerners, East Asians no longer seemed a single entity. In fact, as Harold Isaacs has aptly shown, a large part of the twentieth century was characterized by back and forth views: whenever the Japanese image was high, the Chinese image was low and vice versa.<sup>124</sup> Some,

<sup>120</sup> Quoted in TenBroek, Barnhart and Matson, 1954: 351 (n. 65).

<sup>121</sup> Dower, 1986: 8. However, during the campaign in Guadalcanal in early 1943, the Marine monthly *Leatherneck* ran a photograph with a headline reading "Good Japs." Its meaning becomes clear when one examines the photo's horrifying content: a number of Japanese corpses. For incredulous readers, the caption leaves no room for doubt: "Good Japs are dead Japs." Others did not concur even with this extreme epitaph. A short note published on 13 February 1942 in *The New York Times Magazine* asserted that "even a dead Jap isn't a good Jap. His loving comrades mine him and set him... such are the Nipponese. In death as in life, treacherous." Idem, 79, 152–153.

<sup>122</sup> For the determinants of the decision to drop the atomic bombs, see Alperovitz, 1995; Walker, 1996.

<sup>123</sup> For the shift in American stereotypes of Chinese and Japanese national characters between 1942 and 1966, see Isaacs, 1972: xviii–xix; and until 1985, see Johnson, 1988: 8–12. The best accounts of the transformation of American attitudes towards Japan in the early postwar era are probably Dower, 1999; Shibusawa, 2006.

<sup>124</sup> Isaacs (1972: 71) identified six stages in the history of the Chinese image, at least in the United States: I. The Age of Respect (eighteenth century); II. The Age of Contempt (1840–1905); III. The Age of Benevolence (1905–1937); IV. The Age of Admiration (1937–1944); V. The Age of Disenchantment (1944–1949); VI. The Age of Hostility (1949–).

nevertheless, remained unmoved in their sweeping prejudicial views. A month before Japan's surrender, H.C. McGinnis warned in the *Catholic World* of America's dismal postwar prospects and once again lumped faceless East Asians as a single racial menace:

Together with China, India and Japan, Moscow can arrange that millions of colored warriors be equipped. With Russia's expert mechanized forces spearheading an invasion of Europe and according to current Red tactics, with stupendous concentrations of Red artillery blasting holes in white defenses through which literally scores of millions of hate-infuriated colored warriors will pour to wreak vengeance for the thousands of injustices heaped upon their people, Europe would probably become a veritable shambles. Perhaps the Americas too, for the Bering Strait is not wide...<sup>125</sup>

During the 1970s, the rapprochement with China as well as the spectacular rise of the Japanese economy turned the tables again. The few years that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union were marked by endeavors to redefine the place of East Asia in the West and the United States in particular. Initially, the Japanese "economic miracle" became the target of renewed demonization and critics argued that the entire nation ("Japan Inc.") functioned according to different rules. But race became a virtual taboo in postwar international discourse, so the core issue now became cultural differences. "Japan perplexes the world," stated the Dutch journalist Karel van Wolferen in one of the most significant works of criticism at the time:

It has become a major world power, yet it does not behave the way most of the world [namely the West] expects a world power to behave; sometimes it even gives the impression of not wanting to belong to the world at all. At the same time, Japan's formidable economic presence has made it a source of apprehension both to the Western countries and to some of its Asian neighbors... The term 'adversarial trade' was coined by Peter Drucker to distinguish the Japanese method from competitive trade, in which a country imports and manufactures [goods] of the same kind as it exports... Once it has obtained the required technology, Japanese industry appears capable, with a concerted effort, of outcompeting and taking over from the original inventors and developers in any field.<sup>126</sup>

Eventually, the anti-Japanese campaign, which some referred to as "Japan bashing," lasted less than a decade.<sup>127</sup> By the mid-1990s it became clear that the spectacular economic expansion Japan had witnessed was coming to

<sup>125</sup> Quoted in Dower, 1986: 173.

<sup>126</sup> Wolferen, 1989: 1, 2.

<sup>127</sup> For anti-Japanese criticism since the 1980s, see Morris, 2011.

an end. However, the threat East Asia has posed since the late nineteenth century has not vanished. It was now the turn of China, whose seemingly unstoppable economic juggernaut and rising political aspirations put it into a collision course with the United States.<sup>128</sup> One of the harbingers of this collision was Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington (1927–2008). In the mid-1990s he offered a substitute to the worn-out concept of race. He divided the world into civilizations and accordingly defined the region as a single civilization, or, more accurately, one and a half: The Sinic, and its minor offshoot the Japanese.<sup>129</sup> Although Huntington insisted that his concept differs from race, it appears similar to the way race was used for most of modern history. Not only did he postulate that a significant correspondence exists “between the division of people by cultural characteristics into civilizations and their division by physical characteristics into races,” but he also argued that Chinese identity is defined in racial terms, since being Chinese depends on race, blood, and culture.<sup>130</sup>

Whether the clash Huntington was warning of is cultural or racial, the Sinic civilization, together with the Muslim one, seems in his view to be the greatest challenge to the West in the twenty first century. This is because China aims to be the core state-civilizational magnet for all overseas Chinese communities and a hegemonic power in the region. “Greater China,” he concluded, “is thus not simply an abstract concept. It is a rapidly growing cultural and economic reality and has begun to become a political one.”<sup>131</sup> The link between the Sinic and Muslim civilizations exists not only in the threat they pose but also in their cooperation in the proliferation of conventional and non-conventional weapon. In relation to the West, “[T]he power and assertiveness of both,” Huntington concludes, “are increasing, and the conflicts between their values and interests and those of the West are multiplying and becoming more intense.”<sup>132</sup>

All in all, Huntington’s outlook does not differ substantially from that of many race theorists since 1800. Despite the emphasis on phenotypic immutability and the growing role of genetics in the modern theories, biology has never been the core issue of racial ideologies, and, needless

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<sup>128</sup> This is seemingly a Chinese perception too. As early as September 1991, Deng Xiaoping, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, defined the relations between the two nations as a “new cold war.” Quoted in Huntington, 1996: 223.

<sup>129</sup> Huntington, 1996: 44–45.

<sup>130</sup> Huntington, 1996: 42, 43, 168–169.

<sup>131</sup> Huntington, 1996: 169.

<sup>132</sup> Huntington, 1996: 185.

to say, racism. The rise of scientific thought had little impact on this development and so the race idea remains first and foremost a paradigm of distinction and self-enhancement. The emphasis on distinction since 1800 encompassed virtually any domain, from the physical, cultural and intellectual, to the spiritual, but it essentially dealt with two groups: "us" and "them," Europeans (and their descendants in other continents) and all others. By providing a justification for economic exploitation and political dominance while alleviating fears of losing power, this paradigm also enhanced the confidence and morale of those who conceived it. Huntington's point of departure seems to stem from a similar background.<sup>133</sup> He talks about "civilizations," but ultimately sticks to a Western perspective and writes solely for the West's sake. He merely wants, noted Chandra Muzaffar, a Malaysian Muslim political scientist, "to preserve, protect and perpetuate Western dominance."<sup>134</sup> In this context, all other civilizations are either there to support the West or to clash with it.<sup>135</sup>

Throughout the last two centuries, Western racial constructions of East Asians have witnessed a fluctuating coherence: at times dismissive and even contemptuous, at times apprehensive and cautious, but always seemingly distant and patronizing. Ironically, the entire period was shaped by illusive perspectives—first of the past and then of the future. In the nineteenth century, the European view of East Asians was very much affected by the region's earlier grandeur and the gap with its present, whereas in the twentieth century it was the fear of the region's imminent recuperation of its earlier position. In both phases, East Asia remained the West's alter ego, second to the West but possibly second to none, a mass of remote and faceless people that ought to be kept apart. The partial demise of the race idea left Westerners without an alternative paradigm for dealing with East Asians. One wonders whether "civilization" or "culture" could assume this role.

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<sup>133</sup> For similar views on the correspondence between Huntington's idea of civilization and race, see Mazrui, 1997; Hahm, 1997.

<sup>134</sup> Muzaffar, 1997: 104.

<sup>135</sup> No wonder, then, that the book's concluding chapter is entitled "The West, Civilizations and Civilization." (Huntington, 1996: 301–321).



## CHAPTER FIVE

### “A VERY GREAT GULF”: LATE VICTORIAN BRITISH DIPLOMACY AND RACE IN EAST ASIA

T.G. Otte

The Japanese are much more diverse than they and the world at large like to think. But history, geography, ethnography and culture have induced certain general characteristics in their society. [...] The contacts of the last one hundred and thirty years have gone deep and have changed Japan beyond recognition, but have left the Japanese...less internationally-minded than the people of most advanced countries.

Sir Hugh Cortazzi, Valedictory Despatch (1984).<sup>1</sup>

Writing in the aftermath of one of the international crises that shook East Asia around 1900, the British political commentator and one-time parliamentarian Henry Norman predicted that “[t]he collapse of China...lays the Far East as open to the gambits of international rivalry as a chessboard when the four files face one another for the game.”<sup>2</sup> What he left unsaid was that many of the pieces on the East Asian chessboard were arranged in a hierarchical order that reflected Western perceptions and the power political realities of the day. East Asia was gradually opened to international commerce, diplomacy and exploration from the 1850s onwards. In its wake, Western scientific and cultural discourse, with its

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I am much indebted to the editors of this volume as well as to Hamish Ion, Tadashi Kuramatsu and Keith Neilson for their generous and constructive criticism of an earlier version of this chapter. This chapter is based in part on several private papers and official papers as follows: Acland Mss., Devon Record Office, Exeter; Adams Mss., Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.; Grey Mss., The National Archive (Public Record Office), Kew; Kimberley Mss., Bodleian Library, Oxford; Lansdowne Mss., The National Archive (Public Record Office), Kew; O’Conor Mss., Churchill College Archive Centre, Cambridge; Rockhill Mss., Houghton Library, Harvard; Rosebery Mss., National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; Sanderson Mss., The National Archives (Public Record Office), Kew; Satow Mss., The National Archive (Public Record Office), Kew; Spring-Rice Mss., Churchill College Archive Centre, Cambridge; FO 17, Foreign Office General Correspondence: China; FO 46, Foreign Office General Correspondence: Japan.; FO 405, Foreign Office Confidential Print: Far East.

<sup>1</sup> As reproduced in Parris and Bryson, 2010: 83–84.

<sup>2</sup> Norman, 1895: 401–402.

unshakeable belief in categorization and classification, sought to place the various ethnic groups in the region within its own established racial views. Such concepts were deeply rooted in contemporary thinking. The quest for a general taxonomy of the known world was firmly embedded in nineteenth-century knowledge-based and -driven societies.<sup>3</sup>

Historians ought to beware, however, of the dangers of projecting backwards into the nineteenth century the evil and spurious mid-twentieth-century doctrines that were erected on the concept of "race." Such backwards projection can only lead to a profound misunderstanding of Victorian cultural attitudes towards "race." For them, the study of human differences was a part of natural history or the archeology of pre-historic man. Undoubtedly, they used the term loosely and in an impressionistic manner. There was also a blithe naivety in their assumption that the precise delineation of external physical or physiognomical characteristics allowed for generalizations about mental traits supposedly associated with them. In this manner, John Beddoe, West country general practitioner-cum-gentleman-scholar, traced the racially diverse population of the British Isles and classified it by its physical appearance.<sup>4</sup> In a similar vein, contemporary proto-anthropologists sought to place the ethnicities of Asia in a racially defined order.

For the British, "Empire reinforced a hierarchical view of the world."<sup>5</sup> This not only affected views of those subjected to direct or indirect colonial rule; it also shaped the perceptions of peripheral ethnic groups overseas. Towards the end of the long nineteenth century, these notions of racial hierarchy and stereotyping had become more fully developed and firmly entrenched. In East Asia, the changing perceptions of the Japanese during the second half of the nineteenth century have been charted by a variety of scholars, more so, perhaps, than the equally developed Chinese and Japanese "racial" views.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter seeks to broaden the debate on late nineteenth-century perceptions of "race" in East Asia. By relating racial concepts to contemporary norms of civilization and progress, it will offer a more multi-dimensional assessment of Victorian perceptions of "race" in East Asia.<sup>7</sup> Within

<sup>3</sup> For some recent reflections, see Hopwood, Schaffer and Secord, 2010: 251–285.

<sup>4</sup> Beddoe, 1885. For an instructive example of the loose usage of the term "race," see, for example, Lyall, 1915 [1902]. Stack, 2008: 219–230 is also useful in this respect.

<sup>5</sup> Marshall, 1995: 385. For a discussion of some of this, see Semmel, 1960: 180–181; for an African parallel, see Coombes, 1994: *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Lehmann, 1978; Holmes and Ion, 1980; Kowner, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> For some contemporary views, see Bury, 1955 [1920]: 334–349.



this reassessment, particular attention will be paid to differentiations between Eastern races, here principally the Japanese and the Chinese, and their place within a defined racial hierarchy. Its focus is firmly on late Victorian British diplomatic reporting. In part, this is a matter of preference. But it is driven to no small degree by the consideration that this area still remains largely under-explored. The tension between a genuine interest in the region's cultural diversity, so different from the world imagined in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* (1885) or Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* (1904), and manifest British political and strategic interests will form the backdrop to the discussion here. The sources used—official diplomatic despatches and private correspondence—may lack the sophistication of contemporary scientific treatises; they may be less systematic and consistent; and they may be more impressionistic. But they were no less real than the scholarly efforts of the day. Given their policy-relevance, moreover, they were perhaps even more real than the latter.

The period chosen is one of great significance in the history of East Asia. The international politics of the region were on the cusp of profound change, and so were British views of the various Asian countries. The seemingly irreversible decay of the Chinese Empire and Japan's apparently ineluctable progress to Great Power status provided the organizing theme for many of the contemporary discussions of regional developments. As the scholar-diplomat Sir Ernest Satow observed in 1909, the period "was occupied by a conflict of the acutest character between an ancient civilization that had become stagnant [China], and another [the West] of much later origin, but of far greater vigor, which had overtaken and outstripped its rival."<sup>8</sup> A decade-and-a-half earlier, George Nathaniel Curzon (later Marquess Curzon of Kedleston), then a rising political star of the globe-trotting kind, had placed the fortunes of "the utter rottenness of Chinese administration" and the "swelling power of Young Japan" in an explicitly racially defined context. While China and Japan belonged to "the masculine races . . . above the 24th degree of latitude" that had "retained their virility and [their] freedom," the two were now locked into a struggle for regional mastery.<sup>9</sup> Power political realities, notions of civilization and progress, and racial concepts thus infused each other and shaped official perceptions of East Asian countries.

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<sup>8</sup> Satow, 1909a: 802.

<sup>9</sup> Curzon, 1896: viii, 7; see also Nish, 2005.

*"A Sort of Enchanted Forest": Views of Japan*

British official views of the Far East revolved far more around ideas of civilizational attainment and material progress than around concepts of "race" as such. Internal discussions of Japan's development since the Meiji restoration attested to this. But they also underlined different generational attitudes towards Japan among members of Britain's diplomatic elite.<sup>10</sup>

When, towards the end of the 1880s, the Japanese government raised the issue of revising the so-called "unequal treaties," which granted extra-territorial rights to foreign residents in Japan, the then Foreign Secretary, the Marquis of Salisbury, revealed his doubts about the country's progress and its ability to sustain it: "If the mushroom civilization of the Japanese should decay as rapidly as it has grown, it is probable that the courts will become corrupt," so endangering foreigners residing in Japanese port cities.<sup>11</sup> Salisbury's skepticism about Japan's civilizational progress also translated into doubts about its political reliability. Indeed, throughout his two long spells at the Foreign Office, he dismissed Japan's strategic value for Britain. Ultimately, Britain's chief international competitor in the region, Russia, "could always find some bribe in those seas for Japan," he concluded.<sup>12</sup>

Salisbury's views were very much those of the mid-Victorian generation. Younger diplomats, the nascent Edwardian generation, by contrast, developed a more positive view of Japan. What they and Salisbury had in common, however, was the centrality of civilization in their thinking. C.A. (later Sir Cecil) Spring-Rice, then a second secretary at the Tokyo legation, summed up his impressions for the benefit of friends among the American East coast establishment:

There is certainly a very great gulf between the East and the West—not of race so much as [of] books and religion. We have been on the whole nourished on the same ideals: each generation has had its shaping mind; and we have been all cast in the same mould. But the East and the West have had

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<sup>10</sup> I am using the Mannheimerian concept of "political generations" here; for a fuller discussion of this, see Otte, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Min. Salisbury, n.d. [14 Sept. 1889], Sanderson Mss., The National Archives (Public Record Office) [hereafter TNA (PRO)], FO 800/1. The abortive talks in 1889 can be followed in TNA (PRO), FO 46/448; for the early treaties, see Cortazzi, 1999: 1–14.

<sup>12</sup> Salisbury to Satow (private), 3 October 1895, Satow Mss., TNA (PRO), PRO 30/33/5/2; Nish, 1984: 59–61 is also useful.

no point of contact. . . . [T]here is no climatic difference sufficient to account for the enormous divergences of character.<sup>13</sup>

Especially among this younger generation, there was an undoubted fascination with all things Japanese. To some extent, this was a matter of aesthetics. The subtlety of Japanese art appealed to many British visitors. As early as the late 1870s, Sir Charles Dilke, then a leading light among the Liberals, reflected on the picturesque attractions of Japan: "one feels one's self in elf-land."<sup>14</sup> Rudyard Kipling, who toured Japan in 1889, similarly commented upon "the Japan of cabinets and joinery, gracious folk and fair manners," "this Fairyland."<sup>15</sup> Spring-Rice, too, had succumbed to the charms of the Japanese landscape and the country's art and architecture. Like many other foreign residents and visitors at the time, the staff at the British legation spent the summer months in the mountains around Nikko, north of the capital. It was, Spring-Rice reported, "a sort of enchanted forest where snow white might have lived with the dwarfs."<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, the frequent references to the "picturesque charms" of Japan are a striking feature of the private correspondence of British diplomats during this period. The subtleties of Japanese art and architecture, furniture and garden design left a profound impression on them. The intricate ink drawings with which Spring-Rice adorned his letters testify to this fascination with the "picturesque":

I came on a little bridge across a small stream, with steps on the other side leading to a gilded gate: through this was a small stone court, before the portico of a temple, one mass of gold & colour—stalks, peacocks & flowers of all kinds carved in wood & painted: a bald-headed old priest sweeping the court & nodding respectfully.<sup>17</sup>

On returning from a trip to Korea and China, Spring-Rice rhapsodized on the sights of Japan: "How welcome it was—clear blue sea & clear blue sky,

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<sup>13</sup> Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, Adams Mss., Massachusetts Historical Society [hereafter MHS], Boston, MA, P300/10. The climatic reference is instructive, for H.T. Buckle, in his influential work on civilization, argued that climate and geography hampered the civilizational progress of the Far East. See Buckle, 1857, I: 30–113; for Buckle's influence on Meiji intellectuals, see Holmes and Ion, 1980: 312.

<sup>14</sup> Dilke, 1876: 443.

<sup>15</sup> Kipling, 1908: 314 and 332. Kipling visited again in 1892. See Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 18 May 1892, Adams Mss., P300/9.

<sup>16</sup> Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 5 August 1892, MHS, Adams Mss., P300/9.

<sup>17</sup> Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 20 April 1892, MHS, Adams Mss., P300/9. A typical example of the evocation of "Old Japan" can be found in Mitford, 1915, I: 373–396; II: 397–494.

mountains and rocks and neat little houses. It was perfection.”<sup>18</sup> Maurice de Bunsen, Spring-Rice’s senior by a few years and then first secretary at the Tokyo legation, was no less enthusiastic. The temples in the Nikko mountains were “gorgeous beyond description,” he wrote home: “In a gorgeous shrine all gold and lacquer, quite dark but for the priest’s lantern, we saw the sacred image of Iyeyasu, the great Tycoon of 250 years ago. It was an impressive sight—the dim light, the crouching priests, and the well-known sanctity of the place which few ever see.”<sup>19</sup> Curzon, too, was not immune to such impressions: “By lovers of the picturesque nothing more enchanting than these monastic retreats can anywhere be found.”<sup>20</sup>

The emphasis on the picturesque transcended contemporary fashions in aesthetic principles as applied to natural scenery.<sup>21</sup> It also constituted an essentially conservative cultural reference, rooted in Britain’s paternalistic elite culture, to the perceived attractions of a well-ordered and stable society. That perceptive and thoughtful observer Spring-Rice captured some of this in his letters to his American friends:

The religion chiefly professed . . . teaches the Japanese to despise the individual men: to respect the chief masters, father and mother; but not as men but as institutions. [...] In the face of this wonderful country where the woods are impenetrable, the mountains capable at any moment of blowing themselves and you into space—the springs boiling or sulphurous; the rivers never the slaves of men, but incontrollable, destroyers of dams and bridges, wreckers of fields & villages: the earth not firm but shaking every week & the weather either so hot that you are burned as if in a furnace, or pouring out rains that kill 100 people at a time—before and in the midst of all this mankind seems very small indeed.<sup>22</sup>

While such social tranquility had much to recommend itself to patriotic British gentlemen, the same could not be said of Japanese politics. “Japanese history,” noted Spring-Rice, “. . . is as full of incident as Scotch [history],” a somewhat backhanded compliment at the best of times.<sup>23</sup> Satow later praised the events of the late 1860s and early 1870s as “a political revolution, which was at the same time a restoration . . . , to which no

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<sup>18</sup> Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 3 December 1892, MHS, Adams Mss., P300/9; Gwynn, 1929, I: 121.

<sup>19</sup> Bunsen to family, July 1892, as quoted in Dugdale, 1934: 104.

<sup>20</sup> Curzon, 1896: 103.

<sup>21</sup> See also Bisgrove, 1992: 202–204.

<sup>22</sup> Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 28 September 1892, MHS, Adams Mss., P300/9; see also Thornton, 1964.

<sup>23</sup> Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 28 April 1893, MHS, Adams Mss., P300/10.

parallel can be found in the history of any country."<sup>24</sup> But to most British observers the Meiji constitution was little more than a series of Western concepts and institutions grafted onto older indigenous, clan-based traditions. The latent crisis in the relations between the lower house of the Imperial Diet and the executive seemed suggestive of the artificiality of Japan's constitutional arrangements. Riotous behavior in the chamber, and the government's frequent recourse to proroguing parliament, injected a strong dose of pessimism into British diplomatic reporting. De Bunsen, for instance, concluded at the end of 1893 that recent events had been "such as to discourage all those who have hitherto maintained a faith in the harmonious development and essential orderly working of a Japanese Parliament." The government under Itō Hirobumi had no parliamentary majority. Indeed, there was no government party. The factions in the diet were united in their opposition to Itō, but divided by "the greater or lesser length to which they are prepared to go in asserting their hostility."<sup>25</sup> In Spring-Rice's analysis, the compromise character of Japan's constitution was the root cause of widespread popular dissatisfaction with politics: "there is a deep and strong feeling throughout the country . . . that the Government . . . is in the hands of a corrupt clique, lowborn, dishonest, who have obtained their power on false pretenses, and that the duty of every patriot is to oppose them."<sup>26</sup>

The uneasy compromise between Western influences and Japanese traditions frequently manifested itself in outward appearances. The Emperor's lakeside summer palace was "built in two halves: one entirely Japanese, the other entirely European. The European part is much like an ordinary American seaside house, . . . with Pullman car decorations."<sup>27</sup> Emperor Mutsuhito himself "looked rather like a goosefooted labourer disguised as a German field marshal."<sup>28</sup> Indeed, ill-fitting Western-style uniforms worn by Japanese officials and soldiers were a source of frequent comment. Kipling recalled his encounter with a customs official whom he described as "a hybrid—partly French, partly German, and partly

<sup>24</sup> Satow, 1909b: 865.

<sup>25</sup> De Bunsen to Rosebery (no. 139), 23 Dec. 1893, TNA (PRO), FO 46/429. Hugh Fraser, the minister until 1894, took an equally dim view of the Diet elected in March 1892. See Fraser to Salisbury (no. 24), 22 Mar. 1892, FO 46/417; for Fraser, see Nish, 2002: 41–52.

<sup>26</sup> Memo. Spring-Rice, "Clan System in Japan," 15 Jan. 1894, TNA (PRO), FO 46/445. For more general comments, see also Burton, 1992: 99.

<sup>27</sup> Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 1 June 1893, MHS, Adams Mss., P300/10. The reference is presumably to Hakone Palace in Togashima on Lake Ashinoko. Now a popular tourist venue, the palace was destroyed in the earthquakes of 1923 and 1930.

<sup>28</sup> Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 22 Apr. 1892, MHS, Adams Mss., P300/9.

American—a tribute to civilization. All Japanese officials... seem to be clad in European clothes, and never do those clothes fit.”<sup>29</sup>

Politics aside, in the view of British diplomats Japan had achieved an impressive level of material progress. Here the relevant yardstick for measuring the country’s advance was the spread of its railway network. This was scarcely surprising, for in the Victorian mind railways were the bringers of civilization. Japan’s advances in this field did not fail to impress. It was all the more impressive since the “country is hardly suitable for an extensive railway system, being volcanic and hilly” in its geophysical characteristics, as the vice-consul at Hakodate, Edward L.S. Gordon, observed in a lengthy report on Japanese railways in 1902.<sup>30</sup> George Curzon explicitly linked the spread of railways and Western civilization. With the extension of the railway network, he commented, the “Europeanisation of the country proceeds apace.” Naturally,

[w]here the “iron horse” has rushed in, ... minor forms of Western invention will not fear to tread. In Tokio tramways clatter along the streets; gas flames in some of the principal highways; and the electric light is uniformly employed in public buildings. ... Telephones and telegraphs stretch a web of wires overhead. The long picturesque lines of yashikis or fortified city residences of the feudal lords ... have almost all disappeared, and have been replaced by public offices of showy European architecture.<sup>31</sup>

Japan’s material progress and her acquisition of at least the trappings of European-style civilization set it apart from other Asian nations. J.H. Gubbins, the long-serving Japanese Secretary at the Tokyo legation, reflected on this at the commencement of the treaty revision in 1894. In its “assimilation of Western ideas,” he argued, Japan had “far outstripped” China, “her more conservative neighbour.” Like Curzon, Gubbins identified technological progress as a marker of Japan’s superiority over her traditional regional rival: “In her railways, telegraphs, and lighthouses, in her army, her navy, and the police, not to mention her mint and her mines, she is now either wholly, or practically, independent of foreign

<sup>29</sup> Kipling, 1908, I: 315. For a further discussion, see also Kowner, 2001: 32–33.

<sup>30</sup> Memo. Gordon, “Japan Railways: An Account of the Japanese Railway System in 1902,” 1902, TNA (PRO), FO 46/561. This was an exhaustive, 228 page-long examination of the railway network in Japan. For contemporary British attitudes towards railways, see Wolmar, 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Curzon, 1896: 13.

assistance, and her numerous fleet of merchant vessels is officered chiefly and manned entirely by Japanese."<sup>32</sup>

References to the outward manifestations of Japan's material and technological progress were frequent and numerous in diplomatic reporting as much as in contemporary travelogues. But this was not merely the result of Japan's assimilation of Western ideas. It was also rooted in what Henry Norman described as "the sacred and ineradicable distinction of race."<sup>33</sup> Cecil Spring-Rice came to a similar conclusion. Not the least part of Japan's national strength was derived from the fact "that it is the only oriental country homogenous in language, religion and race: and absolutely alone in its patriotism which is most intense."<sup>34</sup>

There was little doubt in the minds of British observers that their racial characteristics made the Japanese superior to other Asiatic ethnic groups. Henry Norman praised the "skill and intelligence of the Japanese at all handicrafts." The Japanese, he opined, possessed "a spirit of true originality, a creative power in the great things of life—politics, administration, morals, science, and art."<sup>35</sup> Their personal habits of cleanliness set them apart from the Chinese and the Koreans. Japanese inns, the much-travelled Spring-Rice commented, were "always the same: a... dark opening on the street; behind a beautiful clean room with painted screens and mats with double walls of sliding screens... and on two sides a garden..., sumptuously neat and a pleasure to look at." Japanese houses were wonders to behold: "The luxury of these hot baths with their beautiful cleanliness & neatness of the dressing rooms can't be described."<sup>36</sup>

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 threw assumptions of Japan's elevated position within the racial hierarchy of East Asia into sharper relief.<sup>37</sup> On the eve of the conflict, British naval and military intelligence assessments emphasized Japan's superior "organisation, discipline and training." Her army compared "with the Chinese in much the same way as the forces of nineteenth century civilization compare with those of mediaeval

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<sup>32</sup> Gubbins to Bertie (private), 26 February 1894, TNA (PRO), FO 46/445. Gubbins was an ardent Japanophile: "Japan is everything to him," Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 10 June 1892, MHS, Adams Mss., P300/9. For a biographical vignette, see Nish, 1997, II: 107–119.

<sup>33</sup> Norman, 1895: 397.

<sup>34</sup> Memo. Spring-Rice, "Clan System in Japan," 15 Jan. 1894, TNA (PRO), FO 46/445.

<sup>35</sup> Norman, 1895: 381, 384.

<sup>36</sup> Quotes from Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 18 July and 5 Aug. 1892, MHS, Adams Mss., P300/9.

<sup>37</sup> Paine, 2005.



times.”<sup>38</sup> The stunning military successes over the numerically superior Chinese underscored the martial character of the Japanese, the notion of “martial races” having long been a feature of British perceptions of Asia. The conflict had revealed the Japanese to be “stubborn fighters and born sailors,” Curzon observed.<sup>39</sup> Surgeon-General William (later Sir William) Taylor, an Indian army officer who had been a military observer during the 1894–95 war, offered a similar assessment: “The Japanese are a small race, but they are large chested, and strong-limbed. They are capable of marching against any troops I have seen.” Their discipline and morale made a profound impression on Taylor, and so did the proficiency of the officers in the military sciences:

But every Jap[anese] is brave and tough; in ordinary times, an industrious and peaceful man, he loves fighting. He not only has no fear of death but he has an utter contempt for life, or rather the love of it, and is proud to lay it down for his country.

The women of Japan have a very great, indeed, I believe the greatest influence in generating that spirit. [...] A nation whose women are of that fibre must produce men who will . . . make the best soldiers, who will scorn privations and hardships, bear them all cheerfully, willingly and fight bravely to the death for their country and their Sovereign.<sup>40</sup>

It was their patriotic spirit that gave the Japanese the edge over their enemy in the war, emphasized Captain N.W.H. Du Boulay, the military attaché at Tokyo: “this patriotic spirit leads people not only to undergo sacrifices during war, but also to obey.”<sup>41</sup>

However much Japan had advanced since the Meiji restoration, to the minds of many British diplomats fundamental differences remained. The country’s recent accomplishments were often little more than a thin veneer of Western-style civilization which overlaid its Oriental core. Spring-Rice was struck by the extent to which superstitious customs were still observed in Japan, rituals for exorcising those bewitched by a fox, for

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<sup>38</sup> Quotes from memo. Bridge [Director, Naval Intelligence], “Comparative Statement of the Chinese and Japanese Navies,” 16 July 1894, and memo. Chapman [Director, Military Intelligence], “Memorandum on the Relative Values of the Armies of China and Japan,” 16 July 1894, TNA (PRO), FO 405/60/89 and 91; Otte, 2007: 36–37.

<sup>39</sup> Curzon, 1896: 393. For some observations on “martial races,” see Kiernan, 1982: 51–56; Mason, 1974: 341–361.

<sup>40</sup> Memo. Taylor, “A few impressions of the Japanese army, its organisation, mobility and efficiency, from observations during the late war with China,” 27 Nov. 1895, TNA (PRO), FO 46/460.

<sup>41</sup> Du Boulay to Chapman (confidential), 7 Feb. 1896, TNA (PRO), FO 46/477. Earlier, he had observed that, whilst discipline and morale were high, the officer corps lacked real leadership skills (Du Boulay to Chapman, 10 July 1895, FO 46/460).

instance.<sup>42</sup> As Sir Henry Blake, the Governor of Hong Kong, noted in the summer of 1900, "[w]e are all charmed with the externals of Japan, which appears to have all the elements of progress."<sup>43</sup> But the roots of these "elements of progress" seemed shallow at best. The Japanese, like any *arriviste*, Spring-Rice argued, lacked self-confidence: "The Japanese are anxious about outside opinion . . . and put themselves entirely in the hands of the European enquirer."<sup>44</sup>

This perceived insecurity could easily swing to the other extreme to manifest itself in high-handedness in Japan's diplomatic dealings with the foreign Powers. The so-called "unequal treaties" were a case in point. As Hugh Fraser, Britain's envoy in Tokyo between 1888 and 1894, pointed out repeatedly, the Japanese political class and the wider public were "highly sensitive" on the issue of foreign consular jurisdiction in Japan, which was widely seen "as injurious to national dignity." There was always the temptation, therefore, for Japanese ministers to seek a direct confrontation with the Powers, possibly with the aim of unilaterally abrogating the existing treaties.<sup>45</sup>

When, in late 1893, Tokyo began to press in earnest for treaty revision, senior British officials were receptive to Japan's aim of "advancing into line with the great civilized nations of the world."<sup>46</sup> General sympathy with Japan's case aside, diplomats like de Bunsen judged treaty revision to be in Britain's enlightened self-interest: "We shall never get rid of the anti-foreign feeling here which is quite natural & arisen from a feeling of inferiority." Refusal to renegotiate the treaty would "drive the Jap[ane]se to desperation & they w[ou]ld do something rash, curable only by gunboats."<sup>47</sup>

Heated discussions of the subject in the Diet and the pages of the more partisan organs of the Japanese press at the turn of 1893–4 confirmed British suspicions that Japan's Oriental core was only thinly coated by a veneer of Western civilization. Throughout his official career, F.L. (later Sir Francis) Bertie, the Assistant Under-secretary at the Foreign Office in whose departmental bailiwick fell Far Eastern affairs, had been a strong and consistent advocate of close Anglo-Japanese ties. Even so, he balked

<sup>42</sup> Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 17 Jan. 1893, MHS, Adams Mss., P300/10.

<sup>43</sup> Blake to Morrison, 11 June 1900, in Hui-Min, 1976, I: no. 80.

<sup>44</sup> Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 8 May 1893, MHS, Adams Mss., P300/10.

<sup>45</sup> Fraser to Salisbury (no. 11), 3 Feb. 1892, TNA (PRO), FO 46/417.

<sup>46</sup> De Bunsen to Rosebery (no. 144), 31 Dec. 1893, TNA (PRO), FO 46/429.

<sup>47</sup> De Bunsen to Spring-Rice, 26 Jan. 1894, Spring-Rice Mss., Churchill College Archive Centre [hereafter CCAC], Cambridge, CASR 1/4.

at what he regarded as Japanese bullying tactics: "as Japan desired to enter the 'Comity of Western Nations' the Japanese Gov[ernmen]t must realise that one of the first principles of those States is the respect for Treaties, which cannot be revoked because the Treaty Provisions happen to be distasteful to it."<sup>48</sup> The Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Kimberley, concurred: "It is necessary to give the Japanese to understand that they will not promote the business by menaces." Britain was not "to be bullied by these very 'advanced' gentlemen."<sup>49</sup> The implication was obvious: Japan's progress might have been impressive; the conduct of her officials, however, fell well short of the standards of gentlemanly conduct. Even after the war had established Japan as the leading Power in East Asia, senior officials in Whitehall would not budge from this line. It was in Britain's interest, Bertie noted in late 1895, "to be on good terms with the Rising power in the Far East but the Japanese ought to learn to respect the British flag."<sup>50</sup>

Success on the battlefields of Korea and Manchuria not only confirmed the Japanese as a martial race. It also underscored British suspicions of Japanese hubris. The "astonishing rapidity with which [Japan] is assimilating all that the West has to teach her," Curzon warned after the war, threatened to "foster a growing vanity against which the Japanese require to be on guard."<sup>51</sup> During the war, the perfervid reporting of the Japanese press raised not a few eyebrows in the upper echelons of the British diplomatic service. The naval victory at the Yalu river in September 1894 was portrayed in the pages of the Japanese vernacular papers "as eclipsing the exploits of Nelson and as having no parallel since his day," noted a bemused Henry LePoer Trench, Fraser's successor.<sup>52</sup> Following the defeat of the Chinese navy, the minister warned, Tokyo could afford to give up the position of reserve it had adopted so far. The desire to humiliate China was now giving way to "the ambition of Japan to prove herself equal to and rank as one of the Great Powers." Indeed, Trench speculated that Japan

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<sup>48</sup> Min. Bertie, 3 Apr. 1894, on Fraser to Rosebery (no. 23), 29 Feb. 1894, TNA (PRO), FO 46/435. In the summer of 1892, the Japanese government had flexed its muscles on this matter for the first time by abrogating the unequal treaty with Portugal. See min. Sanderson, n.d. [17 Aug. 1892, on de Bunsen to Salisbury (no. 67), 16 July 1892, FO 46/418].

<sup>49</sup> Min. Kimberley, 4 Apr. 1894, TNA (PRO), FO 46/435. The talks were eventually concluded in July 1894. See also Nish, 1966: 10–11.

<sup>50</sup> Min. Bertie, 1 Dec. 1895, on tel. Satow to Salisbury (no. 106), 30 Nov. 1895, TNA (PRO), FO 46/460. This was in relation to a Japanese naval commander demanding that a British vessel, the "Thales," salute the Japanese flag; memo. Oakes, "Insults to British Flag," 3 Dec. 1895.

<sup>51</sup> Curzon, 1896: 391.

<sup>52</sup> Trench to Kimberley (no. 130, confidential), 28 Sept. 1894, TNA (PRO), FO 46/437.

might well aim, "during the next century to become the greatest Power in the world, just as she now undoubtedly is the greatest in Asia."<sup>53</sup> Lord Kimberley shared Trench's implicit doubts about the steadiness and cool-headedness of the Japanese. Once the tide of war had turned in Japan's favor, he feared that, "intoxicated with success," she would be "tempted to push China to extremities, regardless of ultimate consequences."<sup>54</sup>

Other events during the war, especially the atrocities perpetrated against Chinese prisoners of war at Port Arthur, served as a reminder that the Japanese, however Westernized, remained Orientals. Trench commented unfavorably on the attempts by the Japanese press "to minimise the massacres and make excuses for the inhuman conduct of the Japanese soldiers."<sup>55</sup> Satow, who had spent the first twenty years of his diplomatic career in Japan and who returned there in 1895 as Trench's successor, thought that, in engineering the conflict with China, Japan had taken a leaf out of the Bismarckian book of statecraft. He was doubtful, however, whether "there [was] sufficient stock of physical strength to meet the huge demands that will be made upon it." Ultimately, he argued, "the [Japanese] people seemed to be too much mere imitators, and wanting in bottom."<sup>56</sup> Statements by Japanese politicians, meanwhile, kindled fears of Japan's inherent aggressiveness. Thus, when Viscount Aoki Shūzō, the Japanese foreign minister, hinted that only "a second Sebastopol" could contain the further spread of Russian influence in Asia, it was seen as more than just general irritation with a regional rival.<sup>57</sup>

It would be tempting to see in such comments the antecedents of later assumptions of a racially defined "yellow peril." However, this temptation ought to be resisted, for British views of Japan were by no means uniform during this period. For some, Japan's recent political, economic and military progress had firmly established the country as a leading Power. One of the most vociferous and public advocates of closer Anglo-Japanese ties was Admiral Lord Charles Beresford. A "breezy" sailor-politician better known for his exploits in the salons of London Society, he briefly enjoyed the reputation of an expert on all matters East Asian at the end of the

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<sup>53</sup> Quotes from Trench to Kimberley (nos. 165, secret, and 169), 14 and 16 Nov. 1894, TNA (PRO), FO 46/438.

<sup>54</sup> Kimberley to Trench (private), 25 Jan. 1895, Kimberley Mss., Bodleian Library [hereafter Bodl.], Oxford, Ms.Eng.c.4396.

<sup>55</sup> Trench to Kimberley (no. 198, confidential), 20 Dec. 1894, TNA (PRO), FO 46/438. See also Kowner, 2000: 126.

<sup>56</sup> Satow to Dickins, 13 Apr. 1895 and 23 Feb. 1897, Satow Mss., TNA (PRO), PRO 30/33/11/6.

<sup>57</sup> Whitehead to Bertie (private), 24 May 1900, TNA (PRO), FO 46/527.

1890s. Beresford argued from a mixture of strategic calculations and racial ideas. After the war with China, Japan held the balance of power in the Pacific region, and this turned her into a potential partner against Britain's traditional imperial rivals—France and Russia. The Korean peninsula, the Admiral reasoned, was “the natural outlet” for the further growth of Japan's regional influence: “Japan will not let Korea slip from her virile hands.” He concluded with a flourish by declaring “[t]his plucky and progressive race . . . the British of the Far East, and they deserve all our sympathy and respect.”<sup>58</sup>

Beresford's advocacy of an Anglo-Japanese strategic partnership was, perhaps, the most effusive and exuberant of its kind. He was not alone, however, in drawing a parallel between Britain and Japan as two kindred island empires. Curzon had returned from his Far Eastern tour with much the same conviction:

Placed at a maritime coign of vantage upon the flank of Asia, precisely analogous to that occupied by Great Britain on the flank of Europe, exercising a powerful influence over the adjoining continent, but not necessarily involved in its responsibilities, [Japan] sets before herself the supreme ambition of becoming, on a smaller scale, the Britain of the Far East.<sup>59</sup>

The notion of Japan as some sort of East Asian version of Britain was well established in British thinking around 1900. Like Beresford and Curzon, Sir James Mackay, an Indian official who had negotiated the 1902 Anglo-Chinese commercial treaty, thought of the Japanese as “the Anglo-Saxons of the Far East.” The sting, however, was in the tail, for Mackay warned of fierce Anglo-Japanese commercial rivalry in the region: “The foreigner looks upon the Japanese as an inferior race & he resents their bumptious manners. The Japanese realise this and feeling their inferiority, their high spirit makes them resent it and probably in their hearts they detest the foreigners.”<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, the rapprochement between the two countries, culminating in the 1902 Anglo-Japanese alliance, had not removed certain suspicions of Japan. Frequently, these were rooted in contemporary assumptions about civilization and civilized conduct among nations. Lieutenant-Colonel

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<sup>58</sup> Beresford, 1899a. The article attracted the attention of Whitehall officials. See Ardagh [Director of Military Operations] to Sanderson [Permanent Under-secretary, Foreign Office], 29 Nov. 1899, TNA (PRO), FO 46/523. At the invitation of the Associated Chambers of Commerce, Beresford had toured Chinese treaty ports in 1898 (see Beresford, 1899b).

<sup>59</sup> Curzon, 1896: 392.

<sup>60</sup> Mackay to Campbell [senior clerk, Far Eastern Department, Foreign Office], 25 Nov. 1903, TNA (PRO), FO 46/575.

Arthur Gillespie Churchill, military attaché at Tokyo from 1898 until 1903, brought such suspicions to the point. Japan, he argued in the spring of 1902, was "an aggressive Power." Her geographical position, "combined with the character of the people, compels her to be so." Indeed, Churchill warned that "in a country like Japan, still only partially civilised (according to Western ideas), the preservation of peace for its own sake is not an end in itself."<sup>61</sup>

Britain's naval attaché, Commander (later Rear-Admiral) Ernest C.T. Troubridge, though anxious to facilitate Anglo-Japanese naval cooperation, concurred with Churchill's assessment that "the value of the Japanese army as a fighting force is much over-rated." At the first encounter with European troops, "they would 'crumple up.'" In addition, he warned that "the Japanese are far from being liked by other oriental races." This circumstance reflected Japan's ambitions on the Asian mainland, but it also diminished her alliance-worthiness for Britain.<sup>62</sup>

At the time, the doubts expressed by the two service attachés were swept aside by Britain's minister at Tokyo, the soldier-turned-diplomat Sir Claude MacDonald. Japan was not an aggressive Power, he affirmed, though he conceded that a Russo-Japanese war for mastery in East Asia was "inevitable sooner or later." MacDonald, an advocate of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, took issue with Churchill's low opinion of the steadfastness of Japanese troops under fire. On the contrary, he asserted that they were "the bravest troops in the world excepting perhaps the Turks." As for the alliance itself, the Japanese were "a proud race and sensitive," he noted; and were Britain "at any time [to] show an inclination to withdraw from the alliance I do not think they would create difficulties."<sup>63</sup> In 1902, the skepticism evinced by the military experts did not weigh heavily with Cabinet ministers. A combination of factors pointed to an Anglo-Japanese alliance: strategic calculations; the expectation, ultimately illusory, of being able to reduce naval expenditure; and, on the part of the Foreign Secretary, the Marquess of Lansdowne, a vague hope that such a

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<sup>61</sup> Churchill to Ardagh (semi-official), 18 Mar. 1902, TNA (PRO), FO 46/563. Churchill accompanied the Japanese contingent during the international relief operations against Beijing in the summer of 1900.

<sup>62</sup> Troubridge to Custance [Director of Naval Intelligence], 1 Oct. 1902, TNA (PRO), FO 46/560.

<sup>63</sup> MacDonald to Lansdowne (no. 33, confidential), 19 Mar. 1902, TNA (PRO), FO 46/563. Nish, 1994, I: 133–145 is also useful.

combination would reassure Japan whilst deterring Russia from committing an act of aggression in Asia.<sup>64</sup>

Lansdowne's hopes, of course, were misplaced. During the subsequent Russo-Japanese War, the generally favorable depiction of Japan in Britain was very much a reflection of the unabated Anglo-Russian antagonism in Asia. Even so, the hammer blows Japan inflicted on Russia at Mukden and Tsushima also expedited the transformation of the country's image as a potentially aggressive and bellicose force in East Asian politics. Sir Ernest Satow, so frequently held up as an ardent Japanophile, took a much more detached view of the country in which he had resided for so long. As early as the mid-1890s, Japan's meddling in Korea had kindled his apprehensions. The Japanese, he reflected, "are not to be trusted to rule over other races. . . . I am afraid they are too ambitious, and there is an element of sanguinary ferocity at the bottom of their character which is very unattractive."<sup>65</sup> At the end of 1904, as the military balance indubitably shifted in Japan's favor, Satow, minister at Peking since 1900, predicted that, in future, Japan "will regard China as a milch-cow."<sup>66</sup> Indeed, privately, he was profoundly uneasy about the consequences of the war:

There is no doubt in my mind that this part of the world is going to be the scene of important events for some decades to come, and that the centre of political interest will be removed here. [...] The rise of Japan has so completely upset our equilibrium [in East Asia] as a new planet the size of Mars would derange the solar system.<sup>67</sup>

The altered power-political realities of East Asia had now begun to transform views of Japan.

### *"The Most Vile, Filthy Place in the World": Views of China*

British perceptions of China during this period were very much the reverse of those of Japan. De Bunsen, who visited the country during his spell at

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<sup>64</sup> For a discussion of the motivations behind the alliance, see Nish, 1966: 204–228; K. Neilson, 2004: 48–53; Otte, 2007: 299–307.

<sup>65</sup> Satow to O'Connor, 6 May 1896, O'Connor Mss., CCAC, OCON 6/1/14. Curzon took a similar view: "Nor . . . is there any indication of [Japan's] capacity to rule or educate subject races of different blood." (in Curzon, 1896: 412).

<sup>66</sup> Satow to Lansdowne (private), 3 Nov. 1904, Lansdowne Mss., TNA (PRO), FO 800/121. None of this, of course, stopped Satow from taking a Japanese wife.

<sup>67</sup> Satow to Dickens, 27 Jan. 1905, Satow Mss., TNA (PRO), PRO 30/33/11/6; Kowner, 2007b: 14–18; Yorimitsu, 2007, II: 379–402.



the Tokyo legation, brought back "a terrible picture of the hideousness and misery of China."<sup>68</sup> This mental picture of China was as much the result of an exposure to the sights and, even more so, the smells of China as of dealings with Chinese officials.

What is most striking about British views of China is the extent to which they were shaped by physical experiences of poor standards of hygiene and sanitation. In part, this was a question of the trying climate of the metropolitan province of Chili [*Zhili*]. Indeed, a posting to Peking entailed not inconsiderable health risks.<sup>69</sup> More significantly, the frequent references to "filth" were linked to assumptions about Chinese racial characteristics. Indeed, among Westerners residing in China, Peking [Beijing], with its frequent dust storm blowing off the Gobi desert, was known as "the Filthy Capital."<sup>70</sup> F.D. (later Sir Francis) Acland, a future Liberal politician, toured the Far East in 1898. His letters home give a flavor of the first impressions China made on an educated Briton in those days. Landing at Taku [*Dagu*] at the mouth of the Pei-ho [*Beihe*] River, Acland was struck by the "narrow lanes . . . swarming with little brown children, and the smell that we caught even on the ship told us at once of the great difference of their sanitary methods." The "fearful smells & terrible dust" were overwhelming: "dust is the only escape for Pekin[g] sewage does not make it wise to breathe or think about."<sup>71</sup>

Both de Bunsen and Spring-Rice made the journey across the China Sea to visit Peking in 1892. Neither man was impressed by what he saw. For de Bunsen it was

impossible to conceive a country more hideous or inns more loathsome. They are all the same—a dirty courtyard, full of ponies and mules, surrounded by a one-storied structure of mud or brick. No food to be had that a civilised person can eat. Add to all this the disgusting aspect of the people, their state of filth and their unconcealed hatred of a European, to whom they would be aggressively rude if they dared.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 18 May 1892, MHS, Adams Mss., P300/9; Dugdale, 1934: 100–101.

<sup>69</sup> Sanderson to O'Connor, 4 May 1894, O'Connor Mss., CCAC, OCON 6/1/4; MacDonald to Salisbury (no. 84), 12 May 1900, TNA (PRO), FO 228/1332. Sir Harry Parkes (minister, 1883–5) suffered fainting fits following his transfer from Tokyo to Beijing and eventually died at his post. Both O'Connor (1892–1895) and MacDonald (1895–1900) were frequently incapacitated. See Otte, 2007: 23–24.

<sup>70</sup> Fraser [consul, Pagoda Island [Luoxing]] to Morrison, 14 Feb. 1898, in Hui-Min, 1976, I: no. 25. See also Becker, 2008: 127–147.

<sup>71</sup> Acland to father, 6 June 1898, Acland Mss., Devon Record Office, Exeter, 1148M/add.14/ser. II/8. Kipling likewise described Canton as "a stink." See Kipling, 1908: I, 305.

<sup>72</sup> De Bunsen to Buxton, April 1892, as quoted in Dugdale, 1934: 100.

Spring-Rice described Peking "as paved, drained and cleaned with good intentions; like a city deserted for 100 years, and then re-occupied by swinish strangers."<sup>73</sup> The Chinese capital was "the most incontestably vile, filthy place in the world [...] a wilderness of dust with an occasional mud hut or brick hovel. . . . A wind laden with dust and innumerable stinks beat against our faces as we stumbled along." He and his travel companion Curzon arrived in Peking "covered in dust and sickened by smells." The capital itself was "a city in hell for the sights & sounds of it and the Chinese are what they call us[:] 'Foreign Devils.'" <sup>74</sup>

Such comments were by no means confined to the private correspondence of diplomats. The streets of the imperial capital, Norman noted in his travelogue, were filled with jostling crowds, "dirty wretches," who "feel . . . your clothes with [their] dirty hands"; and most of the public buildings were "in positive dirt and decay."<sup>75</sup> Curzon commented on "the din and dust, the filth and foulness" of Peking. Even the most seasoned traveller, he observed, "has never seen dirt, piled in mountains of dust in the summer, spread in oozing quagmires of mud after the rains . . . ; his nostrils have never been assailed by such a myriad and assorted effluvia; and the drums of his ears have never cracked beneath such remorseless and dissonant concussion of sound."<sup>76</sup>

Underneath that layer of filth and dust, however, Curzon found much to admire in the Chinese. He thought them a "frugal, hard-limbed, indomitable, ungracious race, . . . self-confident and stolid." Indeed, he formed a higher estimate of "the prodigious strength of Chinese character and custom by . . . contrast[ing] them with the captivating external attributes of Japan." China was a country "of immense, probably of unequalled natural resources. [...] Her people are gifted with infinite perseverance, industry, and sobriety."<sup>77</sup>

Yet these were the attributes of individuals. Collectively, the Chinese were an amorphous mass. China was held back, explained Trench, the minister at Tokyo, because its population was not ethnically homogenous. As a consequence, the Chinese lacked the sense of patriotism that had been at the root of Japan's rise.<sup>78</sup> Such views were, indeed, common-place

<sup>73</sup> Spring-Rice to Ferguson, 24 Oct. 1892, in Gwynn, 1929, I: 139.

<sup>74</sup> Spring-Rice to Julia Cameron, 30 Oct., 19 Nov. 1892 and 7 Mar. 1893, MHS, Adams Mss., P300/9 and 10.

<sup>75</sup> Norman, 1895: 199–201.

<sup>76</sup> Curzon, 1896: 229.

<sup>77</sup> Curzon, 1896: 221–222, 336.

<sup>78</sup> Trench to Kimberley (no. 169), 16 Nov. 1894, TNA (PRO), FO 46/438.

among Western residents in East Asia. Arthur H. Smith, an American Christian missionary, noted with wonder that "a civilized, cultivated, prolific, and enterprising race... can exist... and yet have no thirst to modify existing conditions so as to bring in some state of things more nearly ideal."<sup>79</sup>

China's perceived backwardness, especially when compared to Japan, was rooted in Chinese culture rather than in the biological category of race. The "most fundamental fact... about the Chinese mind," Norman reflected, was "that theory and practice bear no relation whatever to each other. Chinese life inculcates all the virtues: Chinese life exhibits all the vices."<sup>80</sup> These were not merely the superficial impressions of globe-trotting political commentators. George Ernest Morrison, *The Times'* long-serving correspondent in China, noted the "hopeless corruption of the people" in late Qing China.<sup>81</sup> Satow came to a similar conclusion: "People forget the passive resistance of the Chinese, who are like India rubber. You can make an impression with your finger, but as soon as you remove it, the effect disappears."<sup>82</sup> Whereas Japan was a country "intoxicated with the modern spirit," Curzon opined, "China worships its embalmed and still life-like corpse. [...] She is a monstrous but mighty anachronism."<sup>83</sup> Indeed, there were frequent references in diplomatic reporting to popular resistance to reforms and persistent forms of popular superstition. MacDonald, for instance, poured ridicule on the emerging Boxer movement, which brought to many rural villages "the frequent spectacle of young lads practising in a kind of hypnotic frenzy the peculiar gymnastic evolutions inculcated by the craft."<sup>84</sup>

In the case of Japan, Western-style educational and military reforms had welded the country into a nation. Nothing comparable had occurred in China. In addition, the Chinese were not seen as a martial race. They had, as the missionary Smith reflected,

an instinctive aversion to war. In case of emergency they can fight, and do fight, and have done so with more or less success for ages. But fighting is not their normal state of activity.... [...] The Chinese invented gun powder, but

<sup>79</sup> Smith, 1901, I: 5.

<sup>80</sup> Norman, 1895: 294.

<sup>81</sup> Morrison to Chirol, 20 Sept. 1898, in Hui-Min, 1976, I: no. 42. See also Satow to Lansdowne (private), 23 Oct. 1902, Lansdowne Mss., TNA (PRO), FO 800/120.

<sup>82</sup> Satow diary, 18 Feb. 1898, Satow Mss., TNA (PRO), PRO 30/33/16/1.

<sup>83</sup> Curzon, 1896: 395.

<sup>84</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury (no. 96), 21 May 1900, TNA (PRO), FO 17/1413; Young, 1970: 108–119.

they have never used it as the cement by which to hold together institutions and races. . . . Had the Chinese been military people by instinct or by choice, it is obvious that they might have overrun the earth.<sup>85</sup>

China's military capabilities were of a passive kind, agreed two of Britain's representatives in China. Sir Nicholas Roderick O'Connor, minister at Peking from 1892 to 1895, noted that China had a latent "capability to resist aggression which threatens an integral part of her territory." Even so, this passive military might was restricted by "the improvidence and lack of military knowledge which characterise the military and naval authorities of China."<sup>86</sup> Satow, his successor but one, observed that "there is no military capacity [in China], except the virtue of stubborn courage."<sup>87</sup>

To the minds of many British observers, the chief drag-weight on China's progress, however, was the mandarin class. As Curzon argued, the "incubus of officialism, paramount, selfish, domineering, and corrupt," held China back.<sup>88</sup> Chinese officials were remarkable only in their "[c]olossal ignorance of the outer world," Satow observed.<sup>89</sup> The scholar-diplomat was fascinated by Chinese culture and literature. Yet his admiration was mixed with dismay: "Of the Chinese intellect it is impossible not to have a high opinion, but their moral qualities are below par of the leading nations. There is no honesty or patriotism among officials."<sup>90</sup> Chinese provincial officials and most of the ministers of the *Tsungli Yamên*, the Chinese foreign ministry, were the bane of British diplomats in China. Henry Cockburn, long-serving Chinese Secretary at the Peking legation complained about Chinese officials "lying freely . . . & . . . playing fast & loose with us."<sup>91</sup> Sir Claude MacDonald, Satow's predecessor at Peking, was blunter than most in his characterization of "the pigtailed" whom he encountered.<sup>92</sup> But he was by no means exceptional in the low esteem in which he held most mandarins. His description of Li Peng-heng, governor of Shantung [Shandong], was typical. This mandarin, he observed, was "an ignorant and bigotted anti-foreign official of the old fashioned Chinese type."<sup>93</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Smith, 1901, I: 7–8.

<sup>86</sup> O'Connor to Kimberley (no. 220, confidential), 26 July 1894, TNA (PRO), FO 17/1195.

<sup>87</sup> Satow to Barrington, 14 Feb. 1901, Lansdowne Mss., TNA (PRO), FO 800/119.

<sup>88</sup> Curzon, 1896: 338.

<sup>89</sup> Satow to Dickens, 11 June 1904, Satow Mss., TNA (PRO), PRO 30/33/11/6.

<sup>90</sup> Satow to Barrington, 14 Feb. 1901, Lansdowne Mss., TNA (PRO), FO 800/119.

<sup>91</sup> Cockburn to O'Connor, 9/14 Jan. 1896, O'Connor Mss., CCAC, OCON 6/1/4.

<sup>92</sup> MacDonald to Bertie (private), 2 Apr. 1900, TNA (PRO), FO 17/1412.

<sup>93</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury (no. 161), 1 Dec. 1897, TNA (PRO), FO 17/1314; Wilgus, 1987:

British observers took a correspondingly dim view of the Chinese political system. Sir Robert Douglas, Keeper of the British Museum's Oriental collection, described it as "a limited autocracy." In theory, he noted, the Emperor was "autocratically supreme"; in practice, the country's state bureaucracy controlled everything from the movements of the emperor to the actions of the lowest provincial official.<sup>94</sup> The Chinese empire, indeed, was "pre-eminently one of make-believe," he concluded.<sup>95</sup> China was little more than "a group of loosely federated satrapies," Satow noted in 1901. It was a view to which he adhered until he retired from the diplomatic service five years later: "China is not a centralised state of the modern type, but rather a congeries of semi-autonomous satrapies, a confederacy of territories each possessing a separate financial, military, naval and judicial organisation, in fact a sort of "Home rule all round" system, presided over by a central committee."<sup>96</sup>

Such views of China's political system also affected British calculations of future developments in East Asia. On the eve of the Sino-Japanese War, the then Prime Minister, the Earl of Rosebery, observed resignedly that the "methods . . . of China are too languid" to admit of the changes necessary to modernize the Manchu empire.<sup>97</sup> O'Connor argued along similar lines. The "enormous latent powers of this country" could only be "fully developed & brought into play" if China was "opened . . . to Western ideas & purposes."<sup>98</sup> Although he was convinced that "the latent strength of the Empire" could be developed, the short-term prospects were poor. China was "incapable under the present regime of development in accordance with modern ideas and the necessities of the surrounding situation."<sup>99</sup> Indeed, privately he concluded that "there must be a change, & a pretty radical one if China is to exist."<sup>100</sup>

This was very much the consensus view among senior British statesmen and officials. "As to internal reforms, I do not think China would

<sup>94</sup> Douglas, 1894: 36–37.

<sup>95</sup> Douglas, 1904: iii.

<sup>96</sup> Quotes from Satow diary, 8 Oct. 1901, Satow Mss., TNA (PRO), PRO 30/33/16/4; and Satow to Grey (private), 31 Mar. 1906, Grey Mss., TNA (PRO), FO 800/44. See also Beresford, 1899b: 12–15.

<sup>97</sup> Memo. Rosebery, 30 July 1894, Rosebery Mss., National Library of Scotland [hereafter NLS], Edinburgh, MS 10134.

<sup>98</sup> O'Connor to Kimberley (private), 22 Nov. 1894, Kimberley Mss., Bodl., Ms.Eng.c.4396.

<sup>99</sup> O'Connor to Kimberley (no. 6, confidential), 7 Jan. 1895, TNA (PRO), FO 17/1232.

<sup>100</sup> O'Connor to Sanderson (private), 21 Jan. 1895 (copy), Rosebery Mss., NLS, MS 10135; Otte, 2007: 52–53.

care a farthing," Rosebery observed.<sup>101</sup> Kimberley was equally pessimistic about the country's prospects: "China is rotten to the core, as regards the governing class, but the Chinese are an industrious race, who may have a future."<sup>102</sup> As currently constituted, the Manchu empire, Satow concluded, was "hopeless in the matter of reform, . . . the Gov[ernmen]t system [being] thoroughly rotten."<sup>103</sup> Curzon left Peking with the impression that the shortcomings in China's system of government—"short-sighted, extortionate, universally corrupt"—combined with "the temper of the people, averse from national enterprise, untrained to conquest, devoid of patriotic ardour, content to stagnate" was at the root of China's backwardness.<sup>104</sup> Its long history of internal rebellions notwithstanding, Beresford nevertheless concluded that "never before has authority been in so weak or so helpless a condition, the financial position of the Empire hindering the Government from maintaining a force adequate . . . to prevent disturbances and rebellions."<sup>105</sup> Throughout the period of the Great Power scramble for concessions after the 1895 war until the Manchurian crisis of early 1901, fear of an imminent collapse and the subsequent partition of China were never far from the surface.<sup>106</sup>

As with Japan, railways were the barometer of progress: "The prospects of future reform in China may be estimated from the fate of her railway schemes," argued Henry Norman.<sup>107</sup> As the first comprehensive account of railway enterprise in China noted, its history "reflects . . . the main characteristics of the Chinese official classes." Stubborn opposition by conservative officials and widespread popular resistance to foreign encroachments meant that the railways made only slow progress.<sup>108</sup> In the early 1890s, the twenty-one miles of track between the mouth of the Pei-ho and Peking's river port at Tientsin [Tianjin] were "the only railway in China," as de Bunsen observed with dismay.<sup>109</sup>

Ironically, as an internal Foreign Office memorandum argued in 1907, the Great Power "scramble" for railway concessions in the years following the Sino-Japanese War achieved what Chinese officials could not:

<sup>101</sup> Rosebery to Kimberley (confidential), 7 Oct. 1894, Rosebery Mss., NLS, MS 10069.

<sup>102</sup> Kimberley to Durand (private), 29 Jan. 1895, Kimberley Mss., Bodl., Ms.Eng.c.4388.

<sup>103</sup> Satow diary, 20 Sept. 1895, Satow Mss., TNA (PRO), PRO 30/33/15/17.

<sup>104</sup> Curzon, 1896: 407.

<sup>105</sup> Beresford, 1899b: 282.

<sup>106</sup> E.g., tel. Satow to Lansdowne (no. 66), 6 Mar. 1901, FO 17/1487.

<sup>107</sup> Norman, 1895: 308.

<sup>108</sup> Kent, 1907: 1. For a discussion of this, see Sun's classic (Sun, 1954), and Sun, 1955: 179–199, as well as the post-revisionist critique by Huenemann, 1984.

<sup>109</sup> As quoted in Dugdale, 1934: 100.

From the political point of view . . . the tendency of railways must be to make the dismemberment of China more difficult. If all points could easily and quickly be reached from all other points by means of railways, the power of the Central Government would be much increased, and the country would be more closely knit together and better capable of withstanding foreign aggression and dealing with internal disturbances.

Underlying assumptions about Chinese backwardness, however, remained: "such is Chinese nature that it is probable that the Chinese are themselves incapable of successfully building and working a considerable railway owing to the immense amount of dishonest profits that would be made during the process."<sup>110</sup>

British perceptions of China remained suffused with such doubts. No doubt, first the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and then the elimination of Russia as a factor in East Asian politics in 1905 convinced British diplomats that China was not after all destined to decay. Until the Russo-Japanese War, Satow had been anxious for China "to be bolstered up, and saved from a partition amongst three greedy Powers à la mode de Pologne."<sup>111</sup> In the aftermath of that conflict, he observed, China had "begun to pluck up courage again, not only to refuse further [commercial] concessions [to foreign Powers], but also to endeavour to resume those she made earlier during her period of extreme weakness."<sup>112</sup> The Chinese empire "had taken a new departure & that for the policy of the big stick we sh[ou]ld adopt a more conciliatory attitude."<sup>113</sup> Satow and the legation staff at Peking were optimistic that China could successfully modernize herself: "it was of no use merely adopting a foreign set of institutions; . . . China sh[ou]ld be remodelled on Chinese lines."<sup>114</sup> However, neither Satow nor his successor, J.N. (later Sir John) Jordan, had any doubt that the precepts of Western civilization remained superior. The former "believe[d] in the reality of the movement in China to borrow such portions of Western civilisation as may be easily assimilated with her own independent lines of development."<sup>115</sup> Jordan nevertheless had to concede that the internal

<sup>110</sup> Memo. Collier, "Short memorandum on Railways in China" (confidential), 31 Dec. 1907, TNA (PRO), FO 371/35/18909.

<sup>111</sup> Satow to Rockhill, 7 July 1904, Rockhill Mss., Houghton Library, Harvard, b\*46M-386 (2377).

<sup>112</sup> Satow to Grey (private), 31 Mar. 1906, Grey Mss., TNA (PRO), FO 800/44.

<sup>113</sup> Satow diary, 19 July 1906, Satow Mss., TNA (PRO), PRO 30/33/16/9. The new Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, followed Satow's advice in his instructions to Satow's successor at Beijing. See Otte, 2001: 188-189.

<sup>114</sup> Satow diary, 9 May 1906, Satow Mss., TNA (PRO), PRO 30/33/16/9.

<sup>115</sup> Fitz Roy, 1925, I: 296.



condition of China was “not showing the improvement which might have been expected from genuine efforts to reform along Western lines.”<sup>116</sup> Hardened and entrenched views of the Chinese inability to modernize had scarcely begun to shift.

### *Conclusion*

Late-Victorian and Edwardian British diplomatic reporting on East Asia was shaped by contemporary racial ideas. It was perhaps inevitable that this was so. Concepts of race, after all, occupied a prominent place in contemporary Western, scientific and political thinking. Even so, “race” was not a fundamental determinant of Britain’s regional policy. Racial remarks ought to be seen as part of that Victorian obsession with classifying the known world. For British diplomats, trained to observe and to report accurately and dispassionately, notions of “race,” however impressionistic, were a tool for categorizing the different cultures and ethnicities with which they came into contact in East Asia. Establishing such categories, in turn, allowed for some degree of intellectual order to be imposed on the raw political data that was the stuff of everyday diplomacy. And, in turn, this enabled diplomats to gain a degree of control over events.

It is true that British diplomats were far from consistent in using “nation” or “race” in relation to China and Japan. The terms were used interchangeably, as was the case with contemporary usage. At different times and in different circumstances, they stressed political aspects (nation), biological elements (race) or cultural characteristics (ethnicity). However, as this chapter has demonstrated, more important than narrowly defined racial categories were notions of civilization, norms of civilized conduct, assumptions about social class, and ideas of progress in shaping British perceptions of the nations of East Asia. Here Japan’s material advances and its inhabitants’ personal habits of cleanliness stood in sharp contrast to common views of China and the Chinese. Japanese railways, electricity and telegraphs signaled the country’s ambition to emulate the British model of modernity, thereby also confirming British assumptions of superiority. This ambition stood out in sharp relief when it was compared to the economic backwardness and the perceived “filth” and “foul smells” of China.

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<sup>116</sup> Jordan to Grey (no. 98), 21 Feb. 1907, TNA (PRO), FO 405/174/11. See also Edwards, 1977: 351–361.

Indeed, aesthetic sentiments—the appreciation of the “picturesque” qualities of Japan in contrast to the graceless scenery of metropolitan China—played a significant role in forming the positive perceptions of the former country. In this context, social class mattered. A Victorian gentleman could easily identify with an upper class Japanese of the early Meiji period. However, he could find little in common with the “ignorant and bigotted pigtailed” among China’s mandarins. In addition, “Old Japan,” with its perceived social stability, appealed to their paternalistic instincts—much more than the industrializing late Meiji Japan, let alone backwards China, seething with domestic discontent. Japan’s growing military prowess confirmed her as a “martial race.” China’s political and military weakness and its perceived ethnic diversity underscored her non-martial attributes. All these factors combined reinforced the position of the two countries in the British hierarchical view of the world.



## CHAPTER SIX

### PAN-MONGOLIANS AT TWILIGHT: EAST ASIA AND RACE IN RUSSIAN MODERNISM, 1890–1921

Susanna Soojung Lim

The Europeans, however, were unreservedly alien, nothing but enemies, and their predominance promised nothing that could flatter national ambition, while in the hands of Japan the Chinese saw the delightful lure of Pan-Mongolism.<sup>1</sup>

Vladimir Solov'ev, "A Short Tale of Antichrist"

Here is where the real "yellow peril" lies: [...] not in the fact that China is going to Europe, but that Europe is going to China. Our faces are still white; but under our white skin flows not the previous thick, red, Aryan blood, but a more watery, "yellow" blood [...] the cut of our eyes is straight, but our gaze is beginning to narrow, to slant.<sup>2</sup>

Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, *The Coming Beast*

At the height of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, a popular Russian periodical, *The Alarm Clock* (*Budil'nik*), featured an illustration of a woman washing a yellow dog in a wooden tub filled with water on the cover of its tenth issue. The white, European-looking woman's elegant coiffure and attire suggest that she belongs to the upper class. She attempts, with considerable effort and exasperation, to scrub the dog clean. The title of the image reads "In the laundry of European civilization," with an accompanying caption that claims: "European civilization: No matter how much you wash this yellow dog, you can't turn it white." This satirical cartoon depicting Japan as a yellow dog being washed by the Russian—European—woman, is a stark example, one among many, of the racist ideology that formed a core aspect of Russian popular attitudes towards the Japanese during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905).

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<sup>1</sup> Solov'ev, 1966–1970 [1911–1914], X: 194.

<sup>2</sup> Merezhkovskii, 1973 [1914], XIV: 10–11.

Russia's war with Japan, which began when the latter launched an attack on Port Arthur, the Russian naval base in the Liaodong Peninsula in southern Manchuria, took most Russians completely by surprise. Initial bafflement was soon followed by patriotic declarations and confident predictions of the easy and quick victory of the great Russian empire over an Asian nation that had never been considered a serious political or military power.<sup>3</sup> As several scholars have pointed out, the images of the Japanese which were widely circulated in the Russian press of the time—in written and visual media such as newspapers, journals, cartoons, posters, and the *lubki*, Russia's distinctive popular prints—were unmistakably racial in nature.<sup>4</sup> The content of such racial portrayals and the spirit of vehement jingoism motivating them are perhaps best captured by Alexander Pasternak, author Boris Pasternak's brother, who was ten years old at the time. In his memoir, he recalls:

In town, everything kept step with the strut of the two-headed Imperial eagle. . . . The Japanese were uniformly portrayed as knock-kneed weaklings, slant-eyed, yellow-skinned, and, for some reason, shaggy-haired—a puny kind of monkey, invariably dubbed “Japs” and “macaques.” Opposing them were the legendary heroes of our army, Russian stalwarts and Manchurian Cossacks. . . . The chef d'œuvre, I remember, was a Cossack, riding at the trot with lance aslant on his shoulder, a clutch of Japs skewered on it like rats on a spit [...].<sup>5</sup>

As this slightly ironic account suggests, there were those among the Russian intelligentsia who were critical of and even embarrassed by the racial caricatures they felt reflected the crude taste of the masses, and accordingly sought to distance themselves from such attitudes. But although Pasternak wonders why the Japanese were depicted as monkeys, the identification of the two appears to have been quite natural and irresistible for many Russians from the lower classes, as seen in their consumption of popular prints, to the highest figures of the tsarist government, including Nicholas II and Aleksei Kuropatkin, commander-in-chief of the Russian forces, both of whom commonly referred to the Japanese as “little monkeys” [*makaki*].<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, racial perceptions occupy a prominent place in representations of Japan and East Asia in the Russian “high” culture and literature

<sup>3</sup> See Wells and Wilson, 1999: 1–29; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 2001: 105–109; Steinberg et al., 2005: xix–xxiii.

<sup>4</sup> See Mikhailova, 2000: 152–171; Filippova, 2005: 411–424; Norris, 2006: 107–134.

<sup>5</sup> Pasternak, 1985: 88.

<sup>6</sup> Kowner, 1998: 212, 248; Norris, 2006: 108.

of the period. The end of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth, a time of great historical and social upheaval for the Russian empire, was also a period of cultural florescence known as Russian modernism. A broad cultural movement encompassing literature, visual art, music, dance, and theatre, modernism began in Russia under the influence of Western European trends, but soon developed into an original and brilliant creative renaissance epitomized in the *Ballets Russes* spectacles of Sergei Diaghilev, the music of Igor Stravinsky, the paintings of Vassily Kandinsky, the theatrical productions of Vsevolod Meyerhold and the films of Sergei Eisenstein.<sup>7</sup>

In literature, a dominant role was played by the Russian symbolists, whose search for a new artistic expression free from the strictures of nineteenth-century realism and positivism initiated an era of poetic revival and creative experimentation which subsequent scholarship came to refer to as the Russian Silver Age.<sup>8</sup> Notwithstanding the diverse artistic temperaments of its members, a basic tenet of Russian symbolism was the idea that the visible world [*phenomena*] was but a pale reflection or imitation of 'true' reality [*noumena*]. While the symbolists of the older, first, generation (Valerii Briusov, Konstantin Bal'mont, Fyodor Sologub) sought to apprehend reality primarily through aesthetic means, the second generation (Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, Viacheslav Ivanov, Aleksandr Blok and Andrei Belyi) came to cultivate an increasingly metaphysical and religious-mystical worldview under the heavy influence of Vladimir Solov'ev, the foremost philosopher and religious thinker of the Russian *fin de siècle*.<sup>9</sup> But while they strove in many ways to break free from past traditions, they, as members of the Russian intelligentsia, also inherited the legacy of their nineteenth-century predecessors, chief among them a preoccupation with Russian national identity and Russia's place between Europe and Asia. The war with Japan, breaking out as it did—when the movement reached its peak—had a profound impact on many symbolists.

The Russian cultural reception of Japan in the context of the war, as seen in the literary responses to the conflict or in Russian artists' interest in *Japonisme*, has already been the subject of several studies.<sup>10</sup> My chapter focuses more narrowly on the issue of race in Russian modernist writings

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<sup>7</sup> Wattle, 2009: 279–294.

<sup>8</sup> Pyman, 1994: 2.

<sup>9</sup> Cioran, 1977: 5–7; Paperno et al., 1994: 13–23.

<sup>10</sup> See Savelli, 1992: 116–295; Wells, 1999: 109–110; Bartlett, 2008: 8–33; Diakonova, 2008: 32–46.

concerning Japan as well as China—an issue that seems to have been generally overlooked or deemed irrelevant in relation to perceptions of the East in Russian high culture. I examine the writings concerning East Asia from the 1890s to the immediate pre-revolutionary period by the philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev and the symbolists Dmitrii Merezhkovskii and Andrei Belyi. The racial images of East Asians drawn by these three key figures of Russian modernism are highly ambiguous and complex, images in which much more is at stake than the straightforward assertion of Russians' racial superiority over its eastern neighboring peoples. In this respect, it would be interesting to recall the illustration of the woman and the dog which began this chapter. The caricature's implicit identification of Russia with "European civilization" (rather than the more frequent Russian peasant or Cossack) gives one pause because it brings up a question that had been the focus of intense reflection for the Russian intelligentsia throughout much of the nineteenth century: the question of whether *Russia* belonged to the white race and to its crowning achievement, European civilization—in other words, whether it was *Western*.

The Russian modernist construction of East Asians as a "yellow race" and its use of contemporary European theories and categories of race was invariably complicated by other factors. These included Russia's ambiguous sense of its own cultural and racial identity between East and West, its long history of engaging with other Asian regions and peoples centuries before its Far Eastern encounter in the late nineteenth century, and its highly charged relationship with the West, a relationship that was marked in turns by impassioned critiques of and longings for its civilization. It is fair to say, then, that in Russian modernist discourse neither the concept of race nor the peoples of East Asia were of primary or intrinsic interest. Rather, they were significant in their roles as potent symbols used for radicalizing and refining Russian narratives of nationality and its cultural critique of the West. However, before turning to Solov'ev, Merezhkovskii and Belyi, it is necessary to discuss those aspects of Russian history and culture that influenced their images of East Asia.

### *Russia between East and West*

When news of the devastating loss of the Russian Baltic Fleet at Tsushima reached St. Petersburg and Moscow in May of 1905, it seemed to many among the Russian cultural elite that they were experiencing a sense of historical *déjà vu*. In their eyes the Japanese were perceived less as



East Asians of the twentieth-century, post-Meiji Restoration period, than as “Pan-Mongolians,” a reincarnation of the Central Asian horsemen who invaded and conquered Russia some seven centuries earlier. They harkened back to a “prophecy” made by Russia’s great philosopher Vladimir Solov’ev, who, on the eve of Japan’s war with China (1894–95) ten years earlier, had propounded a theory of “Pan-Mongolism.” To be sure, the terms “Mongol,” or “Mongoloid,” as well as the term “yellow,” were commonly used in European racial classifications of the many peoples of Asia, including the Chinese and Japanese during the nineteenth century. For the Russians, however, “Mongol” signified not just a category of racial science or an object of study; it also inevitably evoked a collective memory of Russia’s distinctive history of centuries of close contact with the East.

As a continental empire whose vast and ever-expanding territories touched both the continents of Europe and Asia, Russia developed a history of interactions with eastern regions and peoples that were fundamentally different from that of the West.<sup>11</sup> In the earliest period of its history, the time of ancient Kiev (880s–1240s), the sedentary inhabitants of Kievan Rus’ were constantly threatened by the raids of various nomadic tribes from the steppes of the east and south. Then came the Mongol armies under the command of Batu, grandson of the great conqueror Genghis Khan, whose invasion of Russian lands in the 1220s was so devastating and effective that it led to the disintegration of the state of Kiev and the incorporation of Russia into the Mongol empire. It would be nearly two and a half centuries before Russia, under the new state of Muscovy, was finally free from what Russian historians later dubbed the “Mongol yoke.”<sup>12</sup> From the ancient Russian chronicles and icons that depict the invasion, however, it is clear that the Russians of the time did not perceive the Mongols in terms of the modern cultural or racial categories of “European” and “Asian.” In fact, one chronicler professes complete bewilderment as to the origins of these strange and terrifying people, writing: “In that year [1224], for our sins, there came unknown peoples, and no one knew who they were or whence they came from, which languages they spoke, which tribe they belonged to, or what their faith was.”<sup>13</sup> Unable to account for the origins of the Mongols, ancient Russians attempted

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<sup>11</sup> Riasanovsky, 1972: 3–29; Bassin, 1998: 57–84; Figes, 2002: 358–429; Ram, 2003: 24; Knight, 2000: 74–100; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 2010: 1–11.

<sup>12</sup> See Vernadsky, 1969: 57–84; Halperin, 1987: 1–9; Martin, 1995: 134–157.

<sup>13</sup> Nasonov, 1950: 61–62.

to make sense of these people in the only way they could—by perceiving the nomadic invaders in Christian apocalyptic terms. They saw the Mongols as bearers of divine punishment and apocalypse, peoples akin to the tribes of Gog and Magog in the Book of Revelation.

During the reign of the Romanov Tsar Peter I (“the Great”), Russia was radically and irrevocably placed on the path of modernization and westernization. From the age of Peter onwards, Russians, unlike their medieval ancestors, no longer perceived Asians in fear or awe as bearers of destruction beyond their knowledge or control. Rather than a biblical and apocalyptic worldview, Russians now saw the East through the prisms of European historiography and science and sought to clearly locate and categorize its peoples in these contexts. Disregard and contempt characterized the general attitude of Post-Petrine Russians toward Asians, fixated as they were on measuring their nation’s progress against European models. The Russians gradually progressed towards sharing Western constructions of an Orient which, although at times acknowledging the glory of its past, saw it as irrelevant to modern history and mired in states of backwardness, stagnation and political despotism. As for the Mongols who had once ruled over Russia, the possibility that they could have left lasting traces on Russian life and culture was for the most part dismissed. The one legacy they were thought to have left behind, that of oriental despotism as embodied in the tsarist autocracy, was deplored by most educated Russians as the very trait demonstrating Russia’s backwardness in relation to the West.<sup>14</sup> Russia now actively expanded into and colonized the various regions in its eastern and southern peripheries from the Caucasus to Central Asia. These regions were cast as “Orient” in the Russian consciousness, reflecting a psychological impulse that sought to move Russians closer to the rank of European colonizers in the ladder of civilization.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, in reviving the fear of the East, subdued or forgotten in Russian consciousness by the processes of westernization and imperial expansion, the Russian *fin de siècle* construction of East Asians as Pan-Mongolians constitutes an anachronism of sorts, a regression to the apocalyptic mentality found in the medieval depictions of the Mongols. This archaic conception of East Asia was further fused with modern racial theories and a “yellow peril” discourse popularized in the West.

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<sup>14</sup> Bassin, 1998: 61–62.

<sup>15</sup> See Layton, 1994: 1–10; Brower and Lazzerini, 1997: 3–7; Hokanson, 2008: 13.

*Microbes from the Depths of Asia: Fyodor Dostoevsky*

We can already find such notions at work in Russian writings from the latter half of the nineteenth century—namely, in the works of the great writer Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821–1881). In the epilogue of *Crime and Punishment* (1866), the hero, the young student Raskolnikov, sent to Siberia for the murder of a pawnbroker and her sister, has the following strange dream:

[...] the whole world was condemned to a terrible, unheard of and unprecedented plague coming to Europe from the depths of Asia [...]. There appeared some sort of microbes, microscopic beings that attacked the body. But these beings were endowed with intelligence and will. Those who were infected became insane [...]. Whole villages and cities and populations were infected and went mad. Men were killing one another in a sort of senseless rage [...] they cut up and ate one another. There began a conflagration, a famine. All men and all things were destroyed.<sup>16</sup>

In this powerful eschatological vision, Dostoevsky locates the East as the source of plague and destruction, and thereby awakens the idea of divine punishment that had lain dormant in the Russian consciousness. What makes Raskolnikov's dream a striking precursor of the "yellow peril" narratives of the West is the combination of the archaic imagery of plague and retribution with more contemporary elements, such as the biological notions of microbes, microscopic beings, and infection/contamination.

However, and most significantly, this dream from *Crime and Punishment* points to an aspect of Russian nationalist discourse that would have an impact on turn-of-the-century Russian readings of China and Japan—namely, the Russian critique of contemporary Europe. Dostoevsky's thought and works were representative of an emerging nationalist discourse which argued for a unique Russian identity, different from that of the West. As early as the 1830s, Russian writers and thinkers had begun to be increasingly critical of what they believed were the cold rationalism and dead materialism of the West, questioned its notion of historical progress, and urged their countrymen to no longer emulate Western culture and instead look to native sources for inspiration.

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<sup>16</sup> Dostoevskii, 1972, VI: 419–420. Many of the quotations by the Russian writers I discuss are found in 'Collected Works' series. I will be referring to these by volume number followed by page numbers. All translations from the Russian are mine unless otherwise indicated.

A key figure in such a discourse was the revolutionary Aleksandr Herzen (1812–1870), who spent many years in political exile in Europe. Although initially a pro-Western thinker, Herzen became deeply disillusioned by the modern state of Europe, particularly the capitalist modernity and the philistinism epitomized by its bourgeoisie. In his attack on the West, Herzen paradoxically uses the image of China by arguing that the decay and degeneration of Europe meant its “Sinification,” the appearance in Europe of “*Chinese anthills*.” The notion of anthills reflects Herzen’s interest in the natural sciences and his organicist belief that cultures and nations were subject to an evolutionary process of birth, growth, and death. Capitalist modernity was turning Europe into a China. The newest advances of its civilization were in actuality akin to a ‘Chinese’ decay.<sup>17</sup>

Herzen’s creation of a “Chinese Europe” and his striking association of China (Far East) with contemporary Europe (Far West) influenced Dostoevsky. On a visit to London in 1862, observing the city’s working classes living in the shadows of the Industrial Revolution, Dostoevsky spoke of a Chinese element pervading the West.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, and in a way similar to Herzen, Dostoevsky sees the rationalism and individualism of the Far West (“beings endowed with intelligence and will”) in the plague originating from the Far East (“the depths of Asia”) in *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoevsky may thus be seen as an early Russian version of a “yellow peril” narrative that not only presents an age-old threat from the East, but also combines this threat with Russian hostility towards and uncertainty about the modern West.

In addition to the sense of dual perils coming from both East and West, there existed another element in Dostoevsky’s nationalist discourse that was to influence Russian racial images of East Asia. This was his appropriation of the idea of “Aryan,” an idea that reflected the growing popularity of racial thinking in the West. In a famous 1880 speech dedicated to the unveiling of a Moscow monument to Russia’s greatest poet, Alexander Pushkin, Dostoevsky presented Pushkin’s genius as a symbol of the Russian spirit, a spirit uniquely capable of reconciling all differences and thereby achieving a form of universalism superior to any seen in Europe or the world. Addressing Europe, Dostoevsky claimed that Russia was ready to “enter into an all-embracing universal communion with all the nationalities of the great Aryan races.”<sup>19</sup> In the following year, the writer

<sup>17</sup> Herzen, 1954–65, XI: 74; X: 148.

<sup>18</sup> Dostoevsky, 1972, V: 70.

<sup>19</sup> Dostoevsky, 1972, XXVI: 147.

was elated at the news of a Russian victory in Central Asia in which Russian troops captured the Turkmen fortress of Geok Tepe. In an essay entitled "Geok Tepe: What is Asia to Us?" Dostoevsky declared: "In Europe we were Tatars, but in Asia we too are Europeans."<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, however, he expressed bitterness towards Europe, remarking that the Europeans considered "the Turks, the Semites" to be closer to them than the Russians, their fellow Aryans.<sup>21</sup> In this case, the author is probably relating to the fact that despite the best Russian efforts at westernization since the reforms of Peter the Great, Europeans had continued to perceive Russians as Orientals—they had never accepted the Russians as being part of the "white race." This attitude was famously epitomized in the following words, commonly attributed to Napoleon: "Scratch a Russian, and you will find a Tatar." In arguing for Russia's place in the Aryan race, Dostoevsky put forth the idea that it was the Russians who were the "true" Aryans, the ones who were preserving the spirit of European culture in the form of Orthodox Christianity, during a period in which the West itself was going down the path of secular modernity.

*Pan-Mongolians and the Antichrist: Vladimir Solov'ev*

In linking negative images of the Far East and the Far West, Dostoevsky and Herzen were relying on highly mythologized and ideologized constructs that had little basis in actual knowledge of or contacts with East Asia. Nonetheless, in imagining the two poles of civilization together, the Russian writers unintentionally presaged historical events to come, for the middle of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of the direct relationship of Western Europe and the United States with both China and Japan. These encounters also had the effect of mobilizing Russian activities in East Asia. Russia's first significant expedition to Japan followed closely on the heels of the more famous American expedition to that country led by Commodore Matthew Perry (1854). In 1858 and 1860, taking advantage of a China weakened by its struggle with England and France in the Opium Wars, Russia acquired the territories surrounding the Amur River from the Qing Dynasty.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Dostoevsky, 1972, XXVII: 34.

<sup>21</sup> Dostoevsky, 1972, XXVII: 35.

<sup>22</sup> Bassin, 1999: 135.

The main Russian work on Japan in this period is the travel narrative *The Frigate Pallada* by the novelist Ivan Goncharov, who took part in the Russian expedition of 1854. Goncharov's colorful and comic descriptions of the Japanese made his work very popular among Russian readers. Nonetheless, like Dostoevsky and Herzen, this work also betrays an acute sensitivity of the growing interconnection of Far East and Far West, and particularly the vast commercial and industrial network established by the British over China and the Far East after the First Opium War. This expedition to Japan coincided with the outbreak of the Crimean War (1854–56), a factor that sharpened Goncharov's hostility towards England and caused him to see Japan as a potential new frontier for Russian influence. Goncharov's descriptions of East Asians show that by the mid-nineteenth century, educated Russians were well-versed in the ideology and practice of racial classification and were familiar with the perspectives of ethnology and anthropology. Having completed his visits to China, Japan, the Ryukyu Islands, and Korea, and having devoted separate sections to each group, Goncharov promptly launches into an exhaustive survey of the four peoples by discussing such aspects as their "common physiognomy, character, mindset, [...] [and] moral life." He concludes that this family of nations, of which China is the "older brother," belongs to a civilization that has become decrepit. Comparing them to other nations he has seen in his journey, Goncharov states: "The Kafirs, Negroes, and the Malays are like an untouched field awaiting harvest, while the Chinese and their relatives the Japanese are like a corn-field that has dried up and gone to seed."<sup>23</sup>

However, despite the development of direct contacts in the 1850s, it was not until the last decade of the nineteenth century that China and Japan entered the mainstream of Russian cultural discourse. The key factors that shaped this turn were the Russian government's construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, a project begun in 1891 that soon led Russia deep into Manchuria, a Grand Tour of Asia undertaken by the heir to the Russian throne, tsarevich Nicholas in 1890, and the wave of Chinese immigration into the Russian territories of the Far East.<sup>24</sup> It was against this background of unprecedented Russian involvement in East Asia that the philosopher Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ev (1853–1900) began to prophesy an ominous threat coming from the Far East. Born in Moscow, Solov'ev

<sup>23</sup> Goncharov, 1959, III: 245.

<sup>24</sup> See Siegelbaum, 1978: 307–330; Marks, 1991: 28–45; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 2001: 15–23.

was the son of Sergei Solov'ev, a renowned nineteenth-century historian. He was deeply influenced by Dostoevsky, and was in fact a close friend of the great writer; the latter had based his saintly character Alyosha Karamazov in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) on the junior philosopher. Solov'ev was himself an instrumental figure in the development of the Russian Silver Age, and particularly revered by the Russian symbolists, who viewed him as a great mystic capable of guiding them out of the spiritual crisis and fragmentation of their age.

Unlike his mentor Dostoevsky, Solov'ev was not hostile to the West; instead, he spoke of the need for a reconciliation between Russia and Europe based on their shared Christianity, and in the 1880s he began to actively promote an ecumenical union between Russian (Eastern) Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. With this goal in mind Solov'ev visited Paris in 1888, only to be disappointed at the lack of interest for his project on the part of the Europeans. He was instead greatly disturbed by the West's strong attraction to the influences of the Far East, and, in a meeting of the Paris Geographical Society, was particularly struck by the attention feted out to a Chinese military envoy, "a yellow man" who was "the real hero of the evening" (6: 94). In an essay titled "China and Europe" (1890), Solov'ev cast China as a clear antithesis of the Christian universalism he had striven for—and the failure of which had so disillusioned him—by rendering the Middle Kingdom a symbol of exclusive and arrogant particularism.<sup>25</sup>

In contrast, Solov'ev viewed Japan favorably at this time since he assumed that the westernization and modernization of this island nation would undoubtedly lead to its Christian conversion.<sup>26</sup> The Russian thinker was, therefore, shocked by the Sino-Japanese War: Japan had indeed transformed itself, but not in the way he had expected. The westernization and modernization of Japan consisted not of a Christian revival, but of an adoption of the West's technology and its nationalistic and militaristic ambitions. This kind of selective westernization, one which bypassed the Christian spiritual core of the West and appropriated only its material progress, was precisely what Solov'ev had gloomily predicted regarding China. In 1894, therefore, in a poem titled "Pan-Mongolism," Solov'ev set forth a powerful vision that merged these two East Asian nations (who at the time were fighting each other) into a single unified "yellow race," who, like the apocalyptic tribes of Gog and Magog, the thirteenth century

<sup>25</sup> Solov'ev, 1966–1970 [1911–1914], VI: 93–150.

<sup>26</sup> Solov'ev, 1966–1970 [1911–1914], VI: 153–173.



warriors of Genghis Khan, and the carriers of a plague from Asia described by Dostoevsky, would join forces and invade Europe.

According to Solov'ev, both Russia and Europe had refused to unite and had abandoned the idea of Christian universalism, an act for which they would suffer divine punishment. The following stanzas from "Pan-Mongolism," tell of this impending retribution from the East:

Pan Mongolism! The name is monstrous  
Yet it caresses my ear  
As if filled with the portent  
Of a grand divine fate.  
[...]

From the Altai to Malaysian shores  
The leaders of Eastern isles  
Have gathered a host of regiments  
By China's defeated walls.

Countless as locusts  
And as ravenous,  
Moved by a power not of this world  
The tribes move north.  
[...]

O Rus'! Forget your former glory:  
The two-headed eagle is ravaged,  
And your tattered banners passed  
Like toys among yellow babes.<sup>27</sup>

In writing this poem, Solov'ev was influenced by the painting of the "yellow peril" commissioned by Kaiser Wilhelm II, which had depicted the European nations as seven female warriors preparing to confront the threat of the Far East, represented as a Buddha looming in the horizon. As the last quoted stanza shows, it was Russia for Solov'ev that was uniquely singled out by God to be the most direct recipient of the "yellow peril," and to be humbled by "yellow babes." The notion of Pan-Mongolism possessed Solov'ev until the very last year of his life (1900). In that year, in a prose tale called "A Short Tale of [the] Antichrist," Solov'ev fleshed out in full detail his vision of the impending end and the role of the East Asians in this apocalypse. The story begins as follows:

The twentieth century of the Christian era was the epoch of the last great wars, internecine strife, and revolutions. The greatest of these exterior wars had the intellectual movement of Pan-Mongolism, which

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<sup>27</sup> Solov'ev, 1966–1970 [1911–1914], XII: 95.

originated in Japan as far back as the end of the nineteenth century as its distant cause. The imitative Japanese, having copied the material forms of European culture with amazing speed and success, also adopted certain European ideas of an inferior kind. Having learned from newspapers and textbooks on history that such movements as Pan-Hellenism, Pan-Germanism, Pan-Slavism, and Pan-Islamism existed in the West, they proclaimed the great idea of Pan-Mongolism to the world, that is, the unified gathering of all the races of East Asia under their leadership, with the goal of waging a decisive war against the foreigners, that is, against the Europeans.<sup>28</sup>

In "A Short Tale of [the] Antichrist," Solov'ev transfers his own racial phobia onto the East Asians by taking pains to underscore the latter's antipathy to the very white races from whom they were borrowing the tools of material civilization. To this end, the Russian philosopher also highlights the sense of racial brotherhood purportedly shared by the Japanese and the Chinese. His Japanese persuade the Chinese to join their cause by reminding the latter of the alienness of the "Western dogs" and the "white devils." Such an argument leads the Chinese to reason that "[t]he Europeans [...] were *unreservedly* alien, *nothing but* enemies, and their predominance promised nothing that could flatter national ambition, while the Chinese saw the delightful lure of Pan-Mongolism in the hands of Japan."<sup>29</sup> In this way, Solov'ev imagines Japan to be at the head of a great union of the yellow race that includes China, Mongolia, Tibet, Tonkin, Siam, Burma, and Indochina. Once united against the West, these "Mongols" will take over the railroads, conquer Russia, and invade Europe.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the Russian thinker does not neglect to point out the callousness of the Europeans he had witnessed in Paris, for in "A Short Tale [the] of Antichrist" he has the French, and specifically their radical and revolutionary groups, heartily welcome the "yellow faces."<sup>31</sup>

This striking apocalyptic vision of Pan-Mongolians by the foremost philosopher of the Russian Silver Age dominated the Russian modernist perception of East Asia during and after the Russo-Japanese War. The fact that Japan, had 'caught up' with the West in a way that Russia never had in a mere few decades, and, furthermore, the fact that in a conflict sensationalized in the Western press as the first victory of the yellow race over the white it was Russia who was—once again—on the receiving end of an Asian threat,

<sup>28</sup> Solov'ev, 1966–1970 [1911–1914], X: 193.

<sup>29</sup> Solov'ev, 1966–1970 [1911–1914], X: 194–195.

<sup>30</sup> Solov'ev, 1966–1970 [1911–1914], X: 194.

<sup>31</sup> Solov'ev, 1966–1970 [1911–1914], X: 196.

were circumstances that largely stupefied the Russian intelligentsia. The powerful appeal to the subsequent generation of Russian poets and artists of Solov'ev's "Pan-Mongolism" as a response to the impact of East Asia on Russia lay in its distinctive combination of history and myth. On the one hand, Solov'ev's fixation on the "yellow race" eclipsed any distinctions between the Central Asian nomadic culture and the East Asian sedentary culture, between the thirteenth-century Mongolian invasion of Kievan Rus' and the complex dilemmas facing the Russian empire at the dawn of a new century. On the other hand, contained paradoxically in this archaization and barbarization of East Asia seen in Russian discourse were an acute fear and sensitivity concerning the modernization and westernization of China and Japan. Solov'ev's view of the suspicious nature of East Asia's westernization as one that only appropriated the material aspects reflected the long-standing criticism of modern Europe that we saw in the cases of Herzen and Dostoevsky above.

*Positivism Has a Yellow Face: Dmitrii Merezhkovskii*

The direct impact of Solov'ev's synthesis of history and myth is seen in the writings of the symbolist Dmitrii Merezhkovskii (1865–1941). A poet, literary critic, and religious philosopher, Merezhkovskii was a chief proponent of Russian symbolism in its early period, and, together with his wife Zinaida Gippius, who was also an eminent symbolist poet, played a key role in shaping the ideology and culture of the Russian avant-garde. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the Merezhkovskii's advocated a "new religious consciousness" based on Christian ideals that would transform Russian society. Although East Asia was not a main focus of Merezhkovskii's *oeuvre*, the two pieces that he did write, an essay titled "Yellow-Faced Positivists," and a longer work, *The Coming Boor*, are significant for the extent to which they encapsulate the notions of the "yellow peril" and the "Far East" suggested by earlier Russian writers. Above all, as the title of Merezhkovskii's first work shows, racial imagery, whose use in the nineteenth century had been tentative and vague, was now marked by a new level of sharpness and frenzy.

*Yellow-Faced Positivists* (1895), written the year after Solov'ev's "Pan-Mongolism," shows that Solov'ev's theory had impressed the equally apocalyptically inclined Merezhkovskii well before the Russo-Japanese War. Here, Merezhkovskii interprets Japan's victory over China in the Sino-Japanese War in close connection to the domestic crisis he sees in

Russian literature—namely, the predominance of positivism obstructing the creation of a religious art. According to Merezhkovskii, the cause of China's decline lay in the positivism inherent in its culture which rejected anything that was pure and spiritual, and instead aimed only for the practical, rational, and profitable. He writes: "the spirit of Europe's narrow and dead materialism is the spirit of China."<sup>32</sup> In his notion of China, Merezhkovskii is inspired as much by Herzen as he is by Solov'ev. Just as Herzen had equated the philistinism of the European bourgeoisie with China, Merezhkovskii gives positivism, that current of modern European civilization which Russian writers had so criticized, and from which symbolists like him were striving to protect Russian literature, a Chinese, yellow, face. Chinese culture, Merezhkovskii claimed, accommodated only the "materialistic genius." It did not know the spirit of "creative self-oblivion, national fantasy, the sacred Promethean fire of the younger Aryan and Semitic tribes."<sup>33</sup> With these words concerning the "Aryan and Semitic tribes," Merezhkovskii presented his antidote to the yellow-faced positivism threatening Russian literature.

Merezhkovskii further developed his notion of yellow-faced positivism in *The Coming Boor*, written in 1906. This is a work that stands out as much for its impassioned use of racial and biological images as for its ominous title. Following the shocks of Port Arthur and Tsushima, Merezhkovskii now focuses on Japan, seeing its victory as the triumph of yellow-faced positivism. He claims: "Japan conquered Russia. [And now] China will conquer Europe." Like Solov'ev, who had merged Japan and China into a unified yellow race of invaders, Merezhkovskii, despite having written of China's defeat in the previous essay, barely distinguishes the East Asian nations from one another when speaking of the impending crisis of the West. The following passage from *The Coming Boor* is a striking example of how the Russian notion of East Asia and its use of racial categories merge to give voice to Russian anxiety regarding Europe. Here, as before, Merezhkovskii relies heavily on Herzen's notion of 'Sinification' as evolutionary regression. We read:

Here is where the real "yellow peril" lies: [...] not in the fact that China is going to Europe, but that Europe is going to China. Our faces are still white; but under our white skin flows not the previous thick, red, Aryan blood, but

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<sup>32</sup> Merezhkovskii, 1973 [1914], XIV: 40.

<sup>33</sup> Merezhkovskii, 1973 [1914], XIV: 42.

a more watery, “yellow” blood [...] the cut of our eyes is straight, but our gaze is beginning to narrow, to slant.<sup>34</sup>

Christianity (“these ancient Semitic tremors in the Aryan blood”) was under threat, overpowered by a “spiritual *philistinism*” which Merezhkovskii termed “boorishness” [*khamstvo*].<sup>35</sup> Awaiting Russia and the West, the symbolist believed, was the decisive, fateful struggle between the “Coming Boor” and the “Coming Christ.”

There was also something else lurking behind Merezhkovskii’s image of the “Coming Boor”: a profound ambiguity toward the growing forces of revolution and Russia’s rising masses. European thinking on race in the nineteenth century, most famously exemplified in the work of the French aristocrat Arthur de Gobineau, had commonly conflated racial differences with class divisions.<sup>36</sup> The mixing of the racial and social other is acutely relevant to Russian modernism, confronted as its writers and poets were almost simultaneously with the Russo-Japanese War and the Revolution of 1905. In translating the fear of the “yellow peril” into the fear of the revolutionary masses, Merezhkovskii’s *Coming Boor* becomes not only a culmination of the previous Russian notions we have examined but also a distinctively Russian modernist text on East Asia.

### *Japanese Guests in Peter’s City: Andrei Belyi’s Petersburg*

If Solov’ev’s notion of Pan-Mongolism saw its most concentrated and virulent expression in Merezhkovskii’s publicistic writing, it also fed the imagination of a younger symbolist, Andrei Belyi. Born in Moscow in 1880, Belyi, whose real name was Boris Bugaev (“Belyi” in Russian means “white”), was arguably one of the most brilliant and creative minds of Russian modernism. His contribution to Russian literature lies not only in his poetry and verse theory, but also in a prose work, the novel *Petersburg*, which Vladimir Nabokov included (together with Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Kafka’s *Transformation*, and Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*) in his list of the greatest masterpieces of twentieth-century prose.<sup>37</sup> First published in 1916, this great novel is dedicated to the age-old Russian dilemma of “East or West,”

<sup>34</sup> Merezhkovskii, 1973 [1914], XIV: 10–11.

<sup>35</sup> Merezhkovskii, 1973 [1914], XIV: 7–11.

<sup>36</sup> Malik, 1996: 6.

<sup>37</sup> Nabokov, 1973: 57.

a dilemma most crucially epitomized in the city of St. Petersburg, the fruit of Peter the Great's westernization.

Belyi was acquainted with the family of Mikhail Solov'ev, the philosopher's brother, and was a close friend of Sergei Solov'ev, his nephew. Belyi's first and only meeting with Vladimir Solov'ev occurred a few months before the latter's death, in the spring of 1900 and in the home of Mikhail Solov'ev. The twenty-year old Belyi was strongly moved by the ideas and person of Solov'ev, and, after his death, developed a cult of sorts around the philosopher. The fact that in the summer of 1900 Solov'ev's deathbed admonition regarding Pan-Mongolians coincided with the rise of the Boxer Rebellion in China, and the fact that four years later Russia went to war with Japan confirmed for many Russian symbolists, including and especially Belyi, the truth of his prophecy of Pan-Mongolism.

The novel, as told by a whimsical narrator whose presence dominates the work, takes place in St. Petersburg, the capital of the Russian empire, in September and October of 1905—a few months after the conclusion of the war with Japan. The plot revolves around the family drama of a father and his son, Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov and Nikolai Apollonovich Ableukhov, descendants of a Russified Tatar prince from the eighteenth century. Apollon is a prominent senator and a representative of the tsarist state whose reactionary policies become last ditch efforts to preserve the status quo in a period of increasing revolutionary discontent. His son Nikolai is a student who, like many of the young generation in turn-of-the-century Russia, has become privy to a hodge-podge of intellectual fashions: neo-Kantianism, Buddhism and revolutionary terrorism. In a moment of confusion, Nikolai promises a group of terrorists that he will carry out the assassination of his own father by means of a time bomb. Much of the novel's narrative movement is propelled by the suspense surrounding the execution of the murder.

The agitated and paranoid atmosphere pervading *Petersburg* is augmented by a striking group of images evoking the Far East, which are combined in a chaotic jumble with European abstract theories and systems in the minds of the novel's Russian characters. Not surprisingly, Belyi views such a syncretism of Far East and Far West as being deceptive and misleading rather than positive, and as symptomatic of the crisis of Western civilization he and his fellow symbolists had hoped to heal through a true form of Russian-European reconciliation. Images of the Far East are particularly associated with two revolutionary terrorists helping Nikolai in the assassination of his father. One, by the name of Alexander Dudkin, is a follower of Nietzsche. Belyi depicts this character as constantly suffering

from nightmares in which “Tatar and Japanese faces” wink at him from the “yellow wallpaper” of his room. We are also told that Dudkin is haunted by a vision of a “Tatar-Semitic face” with “very narrow little Mongol eyes.” Similar images are repeated in the character of the second terrorist figure, the sinister *agent provocateur* Lippanchenko. In Lippanchenko, Belyi creates a “Ukrainian type” who resembles a cross “between a Semite and a Mongol.”<sup>38</sup> Last but not least are the events in the Far East, which are evoked repeatedly throughout the novel by the following words: “[T]he yellow heel audaciously climbed the hills of Port Arthur; China was in turmoil, and Port Arthur had fallen.” The inhabitants of Peter’s city witness “yellow, Mongolian mugs” riding in an automobile; they turn out to be “famous Japanese guests.”<sup>39</sup>

Such racial images of the Far East are but the most vivid symbols of the novel’s central preoccupation with Russia’s semi-Asian heritage and the notion of mixed blood. In the first conversation between the two terrorists Dudkin and Lippanchenko, we hear that “all Russians have some Mongol blood,” while the Tatar and Eastern ancestry of the Ableukhov family functions as an ambiguous and often ominous and troubled legacy profoundly affecting both father and son.<sup>40</sup> In a climactic moment, Nikolai has a vision of his Mongolian ancestors and wonders: “Was that not the reason why he had a tender feeling for Buddhism? Heredity told. In the sclerotic veins heredity throbbed in millions of yellow corpuscles.”<sup>41</sup> The son then sees his father Apollon in several Far Eastern incarnations: as a head resembling Confucius or Buddha, as an old Turanian and as an emperor of China. Nikolai imagines that he himself is an

[...] ancient Turanian [...] incarnated in the blood and flesh of the hereditary nobility of the Russian Empire in order to fulfill an ancient, secret mission: to destroy all foundations. The Ancient Dragon was to flare up in the tainted Aryan blood, and [to] devour everything in flame.<sup>42</sup>

As the above passage shows, Belyi, like Merezhkovskii before him, makes a significant contrast between the notion of Aryan or Aryan blood and that of Mongol or yellow blood. His correspondence with fellow symbolist Aleksandr Blok at the time he began work on *Petersburg* (1911–1912) supports this fact, containing discussions on Aryan culture in addition to

<sup>38</sup> Belyi, 1967: 39, 64.

<sup>39</sup> Belyi, 1967: 107–108.

<sup>40</sup> Belyi, 1967: 39.

<sup>41</sup> Belyi, 1967: 267.

<sup>42</sup> Belyi, 1967: 267.



references to “yellow blood,” a “Japanese spy,” a “fall into mongolism,” and an “*evil eye, hating Russia* (sending us Mongols and Jews).”<sup>43</sup> Like his predecessors, Belyi collapses the poles of Far East and Far West: the specter of yellow China *is* the deadening atrophy of modern European civilization. When Nikolai asks his father about the “ancient, secret mission,” the latter explains that the “Mongol cause” lies not in the “destruction” of Europe, but rather in the perpetuation of Europe’s “immutability.”<sup>44</sup>

Belyi’s images of East Asia, however, are not only influenced by Solov’ev’s theory of Pan-Mongolism. They also reflect certain occult ideas prominent among *fin-de-siècle* intellectuals and artists in Russia and Europe, namely the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) and its theory of ‘root races.’ Initially a member of Helena Blavatskaya’s Theosophical Society, Steiner had broken from the movement and founded Anthroposophy. The Austrian philosopher had long been critical of Blavatskaya’s partiality to Eastern mysticism. The movement he founded, in contrast, was centered on the notion of an Aryan Christ. Belyi met Steiner in 1912 and became an active follower of his ideas. The fact that Steiner was a great admirer of Solov’ev no doubt contributed to the appeal of Anthroposophy for Belyi.<sup>45</sup>

Central to the cosmology of both Theosophy and Anthroposophy was the belief that humanity was formed from seven root races, consisting in turn of seven sub-races. Spiritual evolution was the process through which one root race succeeded and replaced another. Although some remnants of the previous race were carried over to the next, the new race represented a superior spiritual stage and a higher level of the development of self-consciousness.<sup>46</sup> Such an elaborate hierarchy involving the superior and inferior spiritual traits of different races suggests that it is possible to view the occult theory of root races as a spiritual counterpart of sorts to the ideas of Social Darwinism. These occult adaptations of race by Blavatskaya and Steiner, then, provided a neo-romantic, spiritual language for dealing with racial difference that proved highly attractive to Russian symbolists like Belyi longing for the great transfiguration of mankind.

Occult cosmology held that the present era was that of the fifth root race, the Aryan, whose fifth sub-race were the Europeans. What was perhaps particularly important for a Russian follower like Belyi was the fact

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<sup>43</sup> Belyi and Blok, 2001: 391–92, 408, 416. The italic is mine.

<sup>44</sup> Belyi, 1967: 268.

<sup>45</sup> Carlson, 1993: 198–205; Maydell, 1997: 153–157.

<sup>46</sup> Biehl and Staudenmeier, 1995: 42–43.

that Steiner had not overlooked the Slavs, for whom he reserved a significant place in the spiritual hierarchy of races. The Slavs, according to Steiner, were the sixth sub-race in the Aryan family, one especially close to Christ and one whose sense of community would complement the rationality and individualism of the Europeans (the fifth sub-race).<sup>47</sup> We recall Dostoevsky's words concerning Russia as a member of the Aryan family of nations. In Steiner Russians at last found a Western European who acknowledged the spiritual superiority of the Russians and their Aryan identity—one whose view of Russia was close to their own.

On the other hand, this Aryan root race had been preceded by the fourth root race, the Atlantean. According to Blavatskaya, this was the race to which the various "Eastern" groups belonged, including the Turanians, Mongolians, Japanese, Chinese, and Jews. We recall the close association in *Petersburg* of Far Easterners and Jews exemplified in the figures of the revolutionaries Dudkin and Lippanchenko ("Tatar-Semitic face," etc.). Belyi's linking of these two groups, then, resonates curiously with the occult idea regarding the members of the Atlantean race. It also suggests an anti-Semitic influence further complicating the image of East Asia in Belyi's novel, and one which, in addition to being a prevalent feature of the Russian society of the period, also affected, albeit in a more implicit form, the thought of many Russian modernists including Belyi.

Recent studies show that the symbolists' preoccupation with Aryan culture and their apprehension of yellow Asia is closely linked to what they feared was the overwhelming Jewish influence in Russian culture, an influence that would purportedly weaken Russian national culture with its cosmopolitan and philistine elements.<sup>48</sup> During the war, the Russian conservative press had stoked the perception that the country's revolutionaries, a significant number of whom were Jews, had colluded with the Japanese. In the novel, Belyi gives voice to such views by including them in snippets of conversations overheard in St. Petersburg society. For instance, we hear a guest at a ball argue that there is a "close and clear connection" between the "Japanese war, the Jews, and the Mongol invasion"; between "the antics of our Russian Jews" and those of the "Boxers in China."<sup>49</sup> We should also mention the real-life model for the character of Lippanchenko, Evno Azef (1869–1918), a double-agent and terrorist of Jewish descent infamous for masterminding political assassinations

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<sup>47</sup> Maydell, 1997: 153–157.

<sup>48</sup> Bezrodnyj, 1997: 100–125.

<sup>49</sup> Belyi, 1967: 169.

in 1904–05. Azef was considered to be extremely unattractive, and was frequently described by contemporaries as having a “Mongolian” appearance.<sup>50</sup>

*Petersburg* is one of the few works of pre-revolutionary Russian literature in which East Asia occupies a significant place in the form of a stark yellow imagery. The racialized depictions we see in this seminal work of Russian modernism represent a culmination of nineteenth-century views of the Far East, as well as a reflection of Belyi’s dialogue with his fellow symbolists. It is one of the most striking and disturbing articulations of Russian culture’s anguished reflections concerning Russia’s troubled historical destiny and its place between East and West. And yet Belyi’s example shows that Russian engagement with European racial discourse was highly selective. The novel uses race to focus on the national and the spiritual rather than the purely racial, harnessing the notions of “Mongol” and “Aryan” to serve the needs of Russian identity.

*Towards a New Race of Russians? Scythians and Russian  
Self-Orientalization*

The Russian modernist use of race both prefigured and was transformed by emergent notions of identity after 1917. With the advent of the Revolution in November 1917, Merezhkovskii’s worst fears appeared to have been realized. As far as Merezhkovskii was concerned, the revolutionization of the Russian people had been closely linked to their Asianization, and he saw the “Coming Boor” he had warned about a decade ago in the Bolsheviks’ rise to power. In 1919, Merezhkovskii and his wife Zinaida Gippius immigrated to Paris, where the couple became known as fierce opponents of Bolshevism.

In 1916–1921 Belyi participated in a literary movement called “Scythianism” led by his friend and literary critic Ivanov-Razumnik. The group was inspired by the historical Scythians, an ancient nomadic people of Iranian origin who had commanded the vast Eurasian steppe lands north of the Black and Caspian Seas—an area that included Ukraine and southern Russia. First described by Herodotus in the fifth century BCE as a barbarous and belligerent people, the Scythians had also come to be frequently identified as the ancestors of the Russians by European writers in the

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<sup>50</sup> Geifman, 2000: 19.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>51</sup> For the “Scythians” of the early twentieth century (who, in addition to Belyi, also included Aleksandr Blok, Evgenii Zamiatin, Nikolai Kliuev, and Sergei Esenin) Scythianism was a manifesto that fully claimed Russia’s half-Asian and half-European nature.

Belyi’s interest in the Scythian—Eastern—element of Russian identity following the Revolution demonstrates quite a radical shift from the racial phobia seen in his treatment of the Far East in *Petersburg*. But the striking metamorphosis in the Russian modernist use of race that occurred in tandem with the Revolution is most vividly expressed in fellow symbolist Aleksandr Blok’s “The Scythians.” The poem, published three months after the Revolution in January of 1918, has the first stanza of Solov’ev’s “Pan-Mongolism” as its epigraph. Following the epigraph, Blok proclaims:

You are millions. We are hordes, and hordes, and hordes.  
Try it, join battle with us!  
Yes, we are Scythians! Yes, we are Asians!  
With slanted and greedy eyes!<sup>52</sup>

In striking contrast to Merezhkovskii’s fear that the gaze of Russian eyes would begin “to narrow, to slant,” or to the profound ambiguity marking Belyi’s reference to Russians’ “tainted” blood in *Petersburg*, Blok presents an ‘in-your-face’ embracement of the very physical traits that had seemed to be so repugnant to Russians not so long ago. This self-Orientalizing gesture of claiming Russians’ Asian identity, although sarcastic and addressed mainly to the West, is nevertheless not without a note of celebration and pride.

However, although Scythianism is commonly viewed as the assertion and celebration of Russia’s Eastern identity, there is a subtle but significant distinction that should be kept in mind concerning East Asia.<sup>53</sup> In effect, Scythianism was a refreshing escape from the combined impact of Far East and Far West—from Herzen’s Chinese Europe through Solov’ev’s Pan-Mongolism to Merezhkovskii’s Yellow-Faced Positivism— a construct that embodied the *Russian* ideals of East and West. The Russian as “Scythian” was an “eternal nomad,” a genuine freeman who was above all “unlabeled” in relation to both Far East and Far West.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, for Belyi and Blok the Scythian was a revitalized form of the “Aryan” prominent in

<sup>51</sup> Wolff, 1994.

<sup>52</sup> Blok, 1997, V: 77.

<sup>53</sup> Terras, 1985: 394.

<sup>54</sup> Zamiatin, 1992: 21–22.

their dialogue. A new breed had emerged, representing a creative individuality and a spontaneous, dynamic, healthy barbarism unrelated to the philistine, decaying civilizations of Germany, France, China and Japan.

With the entrenchment of Marxist-Leninist ideology in the late 1920s the Russian pre-revolutionary avant-garde culture increasingly came to be considered as relics of a decadent tsarist past. Russian modernist images of East Asia as a yellow race did not exert a direct influence on subsequent literature or culture. Nevertheless, an examination of this racial construction of East Asians by the Russian high culture of the early twentieth century helps us better understand the Russian notions of self, East, and West at a crucial historical period. And, although beyond the scope of this chapter, it also raises significant questions concerning the role of race in Soviet culture, as well as its perceptions of the various minorities of the new state and the people of the so-called Third World in the context of proletarian internationalism and the aesthetic of Socialist Realism.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### NATIONAL IDENTITY AND RACE IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA: PIL'NIAK'S TRAVELOGUES FROM JAPAN AND CHINA

Alexander Bukh

This chapter seeks to shed new light on the racial construction of Russian identity vis-à-vis Asia in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution. While the October Revolution of 1917 aimed to achieve a complete reshaping of society, current scholarship shows that there were a number of significant overlaps between Tsarist Russia and the new regime, particularly in relation to studies of the Orient.<sup>1</sup> The context of the present study must therefore depart from pre-revolutionary discourses on race and the place of Asia within them.

The notion of race in Russian public and academic discourses has probably been one of the most understudied aspects of Russian identity. According to one of the few comprehensive works devoted to analyzing the dominant understanding of race among physical anthropologists in the Russian Empire, the “liberal anthropology of imperial diversity” was one of its main features.<sup>2</sup> That is to say, the liberal and ostensibly objective mainstream studies of race that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century were free from attempts to discover a pure racial type and to ascribe certain inherent qualities to the peoples that inhabited the Empire, including Russians.<sup>3</sup> According to this worldview, the multiethnic Empire was seen as a “huge patchwork quilt in which every scrap was painted with a number of fusing colors.”<sup>4</sup> The main focus, however, was on the people that resided within the borders of the Empire. Thus, the non-hierarchical classification of races and the rejection of pure racial categorization corresponded with the broader idea of the Russian Empire as a European nation-state that guided the liberal anthropologists in their analysis.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Tolz, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Mogilner, 2008: 108.

<sup>3</sup> Mogilner, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Mogilner, 2005: 300.

<sup>5</sup> Mogilner, 2005: 300.



Like any human taxonomy, however, the concept of “race” introduced to Russia from Europe in mid nineteenth century had the potential to develop into a normative and subsequently hierarchical discourse, uniting and mobilizing the collective racial “self” as opposed to the threatening “Others.” With the possible exception of state endorsed anti-Semitism this potential of “race” was rarely utilized by the ruling elites in the domestic context. It did, however, appear in public discourse in the context of Russia’s conflictual relations with its neighbors in the Far East. ‘Conflict’ meant not only the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, or the debates regarding Russia’s expansion into China, but also the perceived danger from mass emigration of Chinese, Koreans and Japanese to Russia’s Far East.<sup>6</sup> Thus, it is possible to argue that China and Japan played a decisive role in the construction of Russians as a ‘white’ race.

### *Russian Racialism and Asia*

Admittedly, the hierarchical and dichotomous juxtaposition of “white” Russia with “yellow” Asia as it vividly features, for example, in the writings of the nationalist anthropologist Ivan Sikorsky, was not the only Russian strand of thought concerning Asia.<sup>7</sup> The “Asianist” approach, which also emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century and appealed to Russia’s Asian roots was another influential strand of thought. It should be noted, however, that the efforts to Europeanize Russia initiated by Peter the Great in the eighteenth century did not result in Russia’s integration into Europe. The continuous “otherness” of Russia in European discourse, combined with the search for a distinctive Russian identity among Russian intellectuals who reflected on European debates about Russia but also on Russia’s undeniable historical and geographical links to Asia, gave birth to endless domestic debates about Russia’s identity.<sup>8</sup> “Europe” served as the main “other” for both strands of discourse, Westernizing and the Slavophile alike. “Asianism,” which can be seen as an offshoot of Slavophilism also exerted a certain influence on Russian elites in late nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Deriving from the belief that Russia’s origin is Asian and

<sup>6</sup> For these various themes, see Mikhailova, 2008; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 2001: 35; Stolberg, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> See Sikorsky, 2002 [1904].

<sup>8</sup> See Becker, 1991: 49.

<sup>9</sup> Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 2001: 42–60; Laurelle, 2005: 122–133.

therefore that it is distinct from Europe, Asianists expressed an affinity towards Asia and criticized Western decadence, materialism and ruthless colonialism. These thinkers, of whom Prince Esper Ukhtomsky, a one-time adviser to Nicholas II was probably the most influential, relied on mostly political, religious and cultural categories in their writings on the trilateral relations between Russia, Europe and Asia. Ukhtomsky, for example, fervently criticized European “mercantile” colonialism and “insidious” proselytism and argued for Russia and Asia’s “inherent” unity based on religious, cultural and historical similarities.<sup>10</sup>

“Race,” however, while not the main taxonomy, did appear in his writings, albeit in a somewhat ambiguous form. He argued, for example, that Russia’s similarity to India is not only cultural and religious but also racial, since both nations are a mixture of Aryan and Turan (Central Asian) races.<sup>11</sup> Contrastingly, in arguing Russia’s similarity to the “yellow” China and Japan, he presents spiritual, cultural and political arguments to support his position but never racial ones.<sup>12</sup> As such, in spite of his explicit denial of the validity of the concepts of the ‘white’ and ‘yellow’ races which he expressed by constantly putting them in inverted commas,<sup>13</sup> he does imply a certain degree of racial difference between Russia and the “yellow” Asia. This can be witnessed most vividly in his essay on the Russo-Japanese confrontation, which, like his earlier writings is driven by the belief in Russian Imperial glory and critical of Europe, but is also far more nationalistic. The essay refers to a “yellow Asia” that stretches from Korea to Indo-China and explicitly defines it as a “foreign race.”<sup>14</sup>

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the racial difference between Russia and the Far Eastern peoples was self-evident, even to those intellectuals that conceived Russia as part of Asia, and that their vision of Russia’s Asian destiny did not differ greatly from that of those thinkers that identified Russia with “white” Europe and justified the need for Russia’s expansion in Asia in explicitly racial terms.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ukhtomsky, 1900.

<sup>11</sup> Ukhtomsky, 1900: 4–5.

<sup>12</sup> Ukhtomsky, 1900.

<sup>13</sup> Ukhtomsky, 1904.

<sup>14</sup> Ukhtomsky, 1900: 13.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 2010: 230.

*Race and the Bolshevik Revolution*

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 resulted in the rise of new dominant taxonomies, with “class” and “nation” being the main categories defining new identities. The contribution of early Bolshevik policy to the national idea through the implementation of an “affirmative action Empire” under the famous Stalinist slogan “national in form, socialist in contents” has been widely acknowledged by scholars.<sup>16</sup> When it comes to the question of Russian national identity, however, it is often argued that due to such factors such as a weak national consciousness in Imperial Russia, the Bolshevik emphasis on class taxonomy and the suppression of “Great Russian chauvinism,” Russian nationalism emerged only in the 1930s, following Stalin’s policy of Russian cultural rehabilitation.<sup>17</sup>

The construction of national identity, however, does not necessarily entail the existence of heroic myths, national heroes and similar nationalist constructs. According to post-structuralist theory, national identity can be defined as an “ongoing boundary drawing process” in which the cognitive borders of the national “self” are defined and re-defined in opposition to a difference embodied in a multiplicity of “Others.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, any act of border creation between one nation and others can be seen as an act of nation production or re-production, regardless of whether or not it is accompanied by an appeal to nationalist symbols. Seen from this perspective, many of the early Bolshevik policies were indeed acts of production—not merely of non-Russian nations but also of the Russian nation. The best example of this kind of policy is probably the Soviet population census of 1926, which contained a question concerning one’s ethno-nationality [*narodnost’*] and which referred to Russians [*russkie*] as a nationality for the first time. As Valery Tishkov notes, the census, which specifically instructed the pollsters that nationality [*narodnost’*] cannot be substituted by either religion, citizenship or evidence of living in a certain territory, was in effect a division of the population along national lines.<sup>19</sup> Along the Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Uzbeks and other nationalities, the census also “produced” the Russian nation.

Racialism, defined as an “assignment of indelible traits to a particular group,” however, with its immutable and hierarchical identities was

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Martin, 2001.

<sup>17</sup> E.g., Brandenberger, 2002; Miller, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Neumann, 1999; Rumelili, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Tyshkov, 2004: 182–192; Tyshkov, 2007.

officially purged from Soviet discourse.<sup>20</sup> It must be noted, however, that Stalin's definition of a nation did assign certain non-materialistic characteristics to a national group by referring to a distinct socio-psychological mentality as one of its criteria. At the same time, however, he explicitly noted that national differences cannot be attributed to race but emerged as a result of a historical process of national formation.<sup>21</sup> The biological foundations of racialism and the subsequent assignment of immutable and hierarchical characteristics was perceived as going against some of the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism, *viz.* the centrality of class struggle and the possibility of a world-wide communist utopia, as well as negating the principle of equality among all people.<sup>22</sup> Racialism was therefore condemned as a pseudo-scientific kind of "zoological thinking" and later associated with the Nazi regime.<sup>23</sup> Stalin himself argued that national and racial chauvinism are characteristics of a cannibalistic period of history.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, and somewhat paradoxically, the importance of race in the Soviet Union grew even stronger than in the Russian Empire because it became an important factor in defining domestic policies. Racial politics were an integral part of Stalin's policy and a racialized understanding of nationality often resulted in deportations or purges of whole populations based on their nationality or ethnicity.<sup>25</sup> These policies became prominent in the 1930s with the mass deportations or forced relocations of Poles, Koreans, Kalmyks, Chechens and other ethnic groups. However, the biological categorization of certain groups was present in Bolshevik discourse as early as the Civil War of 1917–1921. It was applied to the rebellious Don and Kuban Cossacks as well as to the Russian settlers in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>26</sup>

At the same time, however, racial characteristics were not only applied to nationality, but also to the other key category of identity—class. The parallels between the two discourses and their related policies are quite striking. The process of class creation in "declassified" post-revolutionary Russia<sup>27</sup> evolved in parallel to the creation of nations. As with nationality policy, the process of class creation was supported by an emerging

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<sup>20</sup> For the citation, see Weitz, 2002: 7.

<sup>21</sup> Stalin, 1913.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., Stalin, cited in Plisetsky, 1938: 2.

<sup>23</sup> Plisetsky, 1938.

<sup>24</sup> Stalin, 1931.

<sup>25</sup> Weitz, 2002: 3–5.

<sup>26</sup> Weitz, 2002: 11.

<sup>27</sup> Fitzpatrick, 2005: 30–32.

“statistical industry” that identified, classified and quantified classes.<sup>28</sup> In his work on ethnic cleansing in the Soviet Union, Terry Martin notes the convergence between nationality and class during the collectivization campaigns of the late 1920s, but a full length study exploring the relationship between the two main categories of identity is yet to emerge.<sup>29</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, it is sufficient to note that the process of class creation was accompanied by a selective ascription of immutable characteristics to the various classes. The dominant class, i.e., the “proletariat,” was construed as not merely relating to one’s occupation but also as possessing the correct consciousness. Thus membership in the proletariat was not only determined by inherent characteristics but also by those acquired socially. Some of the “enemy classes,” however, were attributed indelible traits as sanctions were directed not only towards individual “enemies” but also towards their children and other relatives.<sup>30</sup>

Based on the above, we can argue that racialism, which in pre-revolutionary years existed mainly in the context of relations with “yellow Asia,” became an integral part of Soviet domestic discourse. The question that arises from this understanding of early Soviet categories of identity, however, is whether the changes in the domestic categorization of identities affected the construction of Russia vis-à-vis “yellow” Asia. In one of the most influential works on ideology and language, the linguist Valentin Voloshinov argues that no cultural sign is isolated but constitutes an integral part of a broader structure of meanings, what he calls a “verbally constituted consciousness.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, he argued that all the cultural signs (in this case, “class,” “nation,” “race,” “Russia” etc.) that constitute the ideational totality of a given society exist in a mutually dependent relationship. If this theoretical argument holds true, then the Soviet construction of Russian identity vis-à-vis the “yellow” Asia should have also experienced certain changes reflecting those that occurred in the meanings of other cultural signs. Taking this assumption as the point of departure, the main purpose of this chapter is to explore the nature of these changes by focusing on the travelogues of writer Boris Pil’niak. Before proceeding, however, our engagement with Pil’niak and his travel writings requires further clarification.

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<sup>28</sup> Fitzpatrick, 2005: 33.

<sup>29</sup> Martin, 1998: 836–839.

<sup>30</sup> Fitzpatrick, 1991.

<sup>31</sup> Voloshinov and Titunik, 1973: 15.

*Boris Pil'niak*

There are a number of reasons for focusing on Pil'niak's writings. The most obvious ones are his immense popularity and the timing of his travels. Prior to his arrest on a variety of false charges in 1937 and execution a year later, Pil'niak was one of the most popular and widely published Soviet writers of the 1920s and early 1930s, both domestically and internationally.<sup>32</sup> His books were translated, in the words of Pil'niak himself, "from the United States to Japan."<sup>33</sup> In terms of the timing of his travels, Pil'niak was probably the first Soviet writer to visit Japan and China. His trip to Japan and China began in March 1926 when the Soviet relations with the two countries somewhat resembled those at the turn of the century. Only one year passed since Japan ended its intervention in the Russian Far East by recognizing the Soviet Union and completing the withdrawal of its troops from Soviet territory. On the other hand, mid 1920s China was one of the most important locales for the implementation of Soviet "internationalism."<sup>34</sup>

There are, however, deeper reasons for revisiting Pil'niak's writings in the context of Russian identity. From the beginning of his emergence as one of the leading writers in and on the new Soviet Russia, Pil'niak has been controversial, with evaluations of his writings by contemporary critics ranging from non-unanimous negation of his talent to ecstatic panegyrics. Some, like Alexander Voronsky, a revolutionary who joined the Bolshevik Party in 1904 and was one of the leading literary Marxist critics of the early 1920s, praised Pil'niak as the "most talented writer of the everyday of the Revolution."<sup>35</sup> Leon Trotsky, while being more cautious in his appraisal of Pil'niak "the realist" and other "fellow travelers" [*poput-chiki*], nonetheless admitted that Pil'niak was an excellent observer with a "fresh eye and a good ear" who neatly and sharply observed the "fragmented everyday of the Revolution."<sup>36</sup> Stalin cited Pil'niak appraisingly in his "Foundations of Stalinism."<sup>37</sup> As such, despite his complex and multifaceted relationship with the new regime, Pil'niak was perceived by many of the leading ideologues of early Soviet Russia as providing precise reflections on the everyday life of those turbulent years. Even his critics agreed

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<sup>32</sup> Shaitanov, 1990.

<sup>33</sup> Pil'niak, 2002 [1930]: 345.

<sup>34</sup> Lukin, 2007.

<sup>35</sup> Voronsky, 1980 [1923]: 141.

<sup>36</sup> Trotsky, 1991 [1923]: 56.

<sup>37</sup> Cited in Sarnov, 2009: 282.

that the lenses through which Pil'niak observed the new environment were very much the product of the revolution.<sup>38</sup> Considered by some as a representative of "National Bolshevism,"<sup>39</sup> Pil'niak's understanding of the revolution as a national event and his overt nationalism anticipated the change that would take place in Stalin's approach to Russian nationalism in the mid 1930s.

It is important to note, however that, Pil'niak was a writer of the revolution but not a revolutionary writer. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he did not embrace the materialist dogma as the sole and dominant lens through which the world should be viewed. Pil'niak argued strongly against what he saw as the politicization of literature, namely the imposition of the *proletkult* ideology on the writer, and against the simplistic dichotomy of "with us or against us" adopted by the proletarian writers.<sup>40</sup> While embracing the revolution as a liberating element, Pil'niak did not consider himself a communist, but a Russian above all else, someone who is "with the communists because the communists are with Russia."<sup>41</sup> As a revolutionary nationalist, Pil'niak saw his duty as "fulfilling the order of the epoch,"<sup>42</sup> and narrating things as they are without being bound by any ideological position<sup>43</sup> and explicitly rejected the task of "glorifying the faith" ascribed to art under the new ideology.<sup>44</sup>

For this rejection of communist dogma he was often criticized by the "ideologically correct" literary critics that demanded a clear ideological position for lacking a "central idea," and for not realizing whether he is "with the right or with the left."<sup>45</sup> For the contemporary student of the discursive construction of Russian identity, however, Pil'niak's writings provide an ultimately interesting case study. While explicitly rejecting the mechanical or conscious application of the "proletarian" paradigm to his narrative, the revolution was not only the focus of his early work but, as already noted above, also shaped his perceptions. As such, this chapter will try to relate Pil'niak's perceptions of Japan and China to his conceptions of Russia's national identity.

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<sup>38</sup> Polonsky, [1927] 1980: 125.

<sup>39</sup> Agursky, 1980.

<sup>40</sup> Cited in Jensen, 1979: 81–83.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in Golubkov, 1995: 9.

<sup>42</sup> Cited in Nicholas, 1988: 103.

<sup>43</sup> Golubkov, 1995: 4.

<sup>44</sup> Kohn, 1933: 63.

<sup>45</sup> Polonsky, 1980 [1927]: 149.

*Pil'niak's China and Japan*

Chronologically, Pil'niak's visit to Japan precedes his visit to China but here we shall reverse the order of our examination for the sake of convenience. In terms of the positioning of "self" in the *Chinese Diary* (*Diary*), there are a number of striking similarities to the writings of Ukhtomsky mentioned above. Like Ukhtomsky and many other Russian thinkers from both right and left, Pil'niak explicitly distances himself from the "West" epitomized by colonial exploiters and decadent seekers of the exotic. The China that emerges from the narrative is familiar and understandable. Only once the text note that it is impossible to understand China "hidden behind the walls."<sup>46</sup> In all other respects, "China" is almost identical to Russia, and from the first pages the author critically presents and distances himself from the "European" colonial view of China. Thus, the collective Russian "self" and the writer himself are excluded from Europe, which, as in Pil'niak's earlier writings, is depicted as rotting from an excessive abundance of material wealth.<sup>47</sup> In the *Diary* he condemns the British for infesting China with opium and criticizes the concessions and the discrimination and violence against the Chinese in their own land.<sup>48</sup> The Americans are characterized by the sense of Anglo-American superiority, decadence and lack of respect for other cultures.<sup>49</sup> A story of the revolutionary Lyu Hwa,<sup>50</sup> who, according to Pil'niak, was arrested and subsequently tried and executed by the British authorities, is presented from a similar point of view. While similar to Ukhtomsky's critique of European colonialism, the *Diary's* idealization and romanticization of the revolutionary and demonization and de-humanization of the colonial authorities it also reminiscent of the stories of Russian revolutionaries that later became a common feature of Soviet school textbooks.

*China and Internationalism*

There are, however, a number of important differences between Pil'niak and Ukhtomsky that underscore not only the discursive changes that took place in post-revolutionary Russia but also the continuities. For Ukhtomsky,

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<sup>46</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 182.

<sup>47</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 177, 211.

<sup>48</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 182, 189, 231, 251.

<sup>49</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 233–235.

<sup>50</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 238–242.



"race," however ambivalent, is one of the key notions that explain the nature of the trilateral relationship between Russia, the West and China. Common "Asianness" is what brings China and Russia together and juxtaposes them with "West." At the same time, the difference between "white" and the "yellow" Asia creates a hierarchical relationship between "Aryan" Russia and "yellow" China. Pil'niak's conception of the "white" race is similar to that of Ukhtomsky as it is identified with the exploitative "West." The racial and cultural bonds that could be assumed between him and "European" Caucasians are explicitly denied any relevance as Pil'niak mourns the "white pollution" of Beijing,<sup>51</sup> referring to the "Western" sailors, "colonizers and pirates," by locating himself outside the realm of racial and cultural "whiteness."

Unlike Ukhtomsky, however, Pil'niak does not ascribe any racial qualities to either Russia or China. Depictions of cultural differences or curiosities are rare and appear only when the author experiences a physical reaction, such as when he sees the dead bodies floating in the Yangtze river or when he devotes a paragraph to the rotten smell that permeates everything in China.<sup>52</sup> Echoing the poet Khlebnikov's vision of Asian union written in the midst of the Russian Civil War,<sup>53</sup> Pil'niak considers the similarity of Russia and China as being based solely on their victimhood vis-à-vis the West. At a certain stage in the *Diary*, the author notes that he has two "yardsticks," Japan and Russia, in his attempts to measure and understand China. It is Russia, however, and not the "yellow" Japan that he chooses to compare and measure China with. As the *Diary* itself states: "after Japan, (in China) I keep on running into Russia."<sup>54</sup> One may also present the critique of Western colonialism in the *Diary* as a confirmation of this statement, since it is almost identical to the depictions of Russia in his earlier work, *The Third Capital*,<sup>55</sup> where Russia is seen as emerging from the oppression and exploitation of the bourgeois and the decaying West. Thus, in China, Pil'niak sees himself not as the representative of "Asian" Russia but of the new Soviet Russia.<sup>56</sup>

At first glance, it may seem that the diaries are the embodiment of the communist internationalist discourse in which class identity, whether on the domestic or the international levels, is superior to any other possible

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<sup>51</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 200.

<sup>52</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 177.

<sup>53</sup> Tartakovsky, 1992.

<sup>54</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 203.

<sup>55</sup> Pil'niak, 1992 [1922].

<sup>56</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 264.

taxonomy. Racial categories are applied only to oppressors, and China seems to be an extension of the anti-colonial, anti-Western, Bolshevik Russia. However, the "Russia/China" nexus in the diaries is more complex than that. As in the writings of Ukhtomsky, the sameness between the two exists only in their juxtaposition with the West. For Ukhtomsky, the hierarchy between Russia and China is based on the racial difference, as well as on the almost mystic conception of the Russian monarchy as being revered and respected by all the people of Asia.<sup>57</sup> For Pil'niak, however, the hierarchy is based on a temporal difference. China is identified not with contemporary Russia but with an earlier Russia, sometimes pre-revolutionary past but more often that of the years of the revolution and the civil war.

As such, Pil'niak's narrative is closer to that of Aleksandr Herzen, one of the key Russian intellectuals of the first half of the nineteenth century and the father of the notion of "Russian socialism," which, some argue, had the strongest impact on Russia's twentieth century history among the various conceptions of Russian nationalism.<sup>58</sup> Herzen, like Ukhtomsky half a century later, was also highly critical of Western capitalism and materialism and envisaged a special role for Russia.<sup>59</sup> The socialist Herzen, however, whose vision of the Russian mission combined, in a way, the ideas of both modernizers and Slavophile, argued that the sources of Russian leadership in Asia and its ability to lead it towards an alternative modernization, different from that of the West, lies in its socialist tradition of peasant communities and not in the monarchy.<sup>60</sup> It goes without saying, however, that this vision implies, an inherent temporal difference between Russia and Asia in their path to modernity.

The analogy with Russia's past in Pil'niak's narrative on China is explicit and appears throughout the narrative. The soldiers of (the warlord) Zhang Zuolin are compared to 1918 Russia, the "siege" of the trains by the crowds and the stations that pass outside the window also remind the author of the same time. Beijing resembles a Russian wartime city in 1918. Again and again Pil'niak sees scenes from the Russian Revolution in China, including pillage, rape and the burning down of whole villages.<sup>61</sup> At times, he sees images of civil war Russia: The myriad factions with varying ideologies and foreign supporters, the omnipresence of foreign soldiers and weapons

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<sup>57</sup> Ukhtomsky, 1900.

<sup>58</sup> Tolz, 2001: 98.

<sup>59</sup> Zenkovsky, 1997: 55–57; Tolz, 2001: 98.

<sup>60</sup> Tolz, 2001: 99.

<sup>61</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 184–186.

on the streets, the sounds of guns—all these seem to evoke memories of Russia's not so distant past.<sup>62</sup> Similar memories come to Pil'niak's mind when he discusses the somewhat anarchical situation in China, where each town has its own government and its own army, and each province has its own currency, where, he notes, feudalism and communism exist at the same time.<sup>63</sup>

The author's identification with the Russian nation is so strong that he discovers not only Russia's national past, but also his own personal past in China, despite his German roots. One morning, for example, he wakes up to childhood memories of visits to his grandmother in Saratov and goes outside to "wonder around my childhood, because the view is exactly the same."<sup>64</sup> A few pages later, the narrative makes a gradual transition from the personal back to the national as Pil'niak states that "among all the countries I have visited, China is the one that is most similar to Russia—Russia of the Volga region, my grandmother's Russia."<sup>65</sup> Even the signs with Chinese characters remind him of Russian church flags, while shops interiors also look like their Russian equivalents.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, the hierarchical relationship between Russia and China is an integral part of the narrative in spite of the explicitly internationalist and egalitarian nature of the *Diary*. Unlike Ukhtomsky and other conservative thinkers, who relied on racial taxonomy and the conception of Russian autocracy as familiar but also uniquely superior to Asian autocracies in the construction of hierarchy, Pil'niak produces it through the dichotomy of past and present. As such, while avoiding racialism, Pil'niak deploys another modernist taxonomy of differentiation—that of temporality.<sup>67</sup>

Pil'niak's simultaneous appeal to both the class and the racialized nation in the creation of affinities and oppositions resonates perfectly with the domestic Soviet process of categorization. Like the Russia and Chinas of the *Diary*, Bolshevik discourse united the nations of the Soviet Union and simultaneously juxtaposed them with the bourgeois West. At the same time, however, the unequal relationship between Russia and the internal East, such as the Central Asian republics, was maintained through assigning them different locations on the path towards

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<sup>62</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 235–237.

<sup>63</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 192–193.

<sup>64</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 183–188.

<sup>65</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 203.

<sup>66</sup> Pil'niak, 1930 [1927]: 189.

<sup>67</sup> See Fabian, 1983 for a detailed analysis.

development.<sup>68</sup> In other words, the hierarchical difference between Russia and the “less developed” nations was based on a temporal dichotomy which located Russia ahead of other nations in temporal terms—a dichotomy identical to the difference between Russia and China in the *Diary*. This twinned construct of “China and Russia versus the West” and “Russia versus China,” manifests itself most vividly in the following paragraph, which is one of the few instances in the text that explicitly touches on the notion of culture. Following the established pattern, Pil’niak once again juxtaposes Russia and China with European “culture” (inverted commas in the original). The similarity between the two is underscored here by the fact that both ere under the Mongolian yoke, which, Pil’niak argues, destroyed their national cultures. However, in the process of this destruction, it is argued that Russia gave birth to a new and uniquely supranational culture. In this respect Russia stands alone in its uniqueness and in its right to build the first supranational world culture.<sup>69</sup>

### *The Essence of Japan’s Identity*

Unlike the *China Diary*, Pil’niak’s writings on Japan, mainly *Roots of the Japanese Sun* (*Roots*) have been quite popular among scholars from a variety of disciplines. *Roots* (initially serialized in *Izvestia* in 1927), which was published after Pil’niak’s first trip<sup>70</sup> to Japan, is written in a form of a somewhat poetic diary. Pil’niak’s Japan is strikingly dissimilar to China and is characterized by incomprehensibility and foreignness. The theme of an inability to understand runs throughout text<sup>71</sup> which largely consists of at times admiring, at times bewildered, depictions of Japanese culture and numerous references to the Japanese national essence.

It is not surprising, therefore, that some scholars tend to see in Pil’niak’s extensive depictions of the Japanese culture an implicit critique of the Soviet destruction of the Russian cultural heritage.<sup>72</sup> Scholars more critical of Pil’niak’s poetic narrative criticized the author for practicing

<sup>68</sup> Martin, 2001: 126.

<sup>69</sup> Pil’niak, 1930 [1927]: 224–225.

<sup>70</sup> In 1932, Pil’niak paid another visit to Japan and produced another book on Japan entitled *Stones and Roots*, which was supposed to be a self-critique of the *Roots of the Japanese Sun*. The book, which in spite of its ostensible intention of destroying the earlier work reproduces a large part of *Roots* was very much a product of political necessity and an attempt at appeasing the “Soviet God” (Reck, 1975: 191). This article, therefore, focuses solely on *Roots*.

<sup>71</sup> E.g., Pil’niak, 2004 [1927]: 51, 52, 54.

<sup>72</sup> Abdurazakova, 2005.

Orientalism in the Saidian sense of the word. *Roots* has been described as an “uncritical enjoyment of the exotic” where “the author’s innocence is never in doubt”<sup>73</sup> and as a “typical male Westerner’s account of enjoying the exotic and erotic delights of Japan.”<sup>74</sup> A less critical interpretation *Roots*, which is nonetheless similar in its understanding of the text, argued simply that the book is apolitical and presents the author’s fascination with a “picturesque Japan.”<sup>75</sup> This interpretation was also shared by at least some Japanese socialist writers, contemporaries of Pil’niak, who expressed dissatisfaction with his “shallow” view of Japan.<sup>76</sup> It also constituted the basis of the domestic ostracism directed at the author which eventually led to a half-hearted self-critique that appeared as *Roots and Stones* in 1933 after Pil’niak’s second visit to Japan.

Arguably, however, both of these interpretations, namely the discovery of an implicit critique of Bolshevik domestic policy and its perception as an embodiment of Orientalism have significant limitations. For one, they tend to interpret the text as standing on its own and detached both from the broader contemporary discourse in the Soviet Union as well as the world view of the author, his other writings and his place within Soviet society. As to the former interpretation, it is important to remember that despite his rejection of communist dogma, a rather complex relationship with the authorities and the literary elite, and non-equivocal and often critical depictions of the new life in Russia, Pil’niak, like many other “national Bolsheviks”<sup>77</sup> embraced the revolution and the socio-political realities of the new Russia. It is no wonder, therefore, that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, one of the staunchest critics of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet experiment in general was similarly critical of Pil’niak’s negative exposés of pre-revolutionary everyday life in Russia, of his enthusiastic depictions of the revolution and of what Solzhenitsyn saw as numerous omissions of the revolution’s most significantly negative aspects.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, it is important to remember that Pil’niak, a one-time Chairman of the All-Russia Writers Union who enjoyed wide ranging privileges until the mid-1930s, was neither an émigré nor a dissident but essentially a *Soviet writer* and an integral member of the new cultural elite. This was

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<sup>73</sup> Reck, 1975: 188.

<sup>74</sup> Heldt, 1995: 176.

<sup>75</sup> Molodyakov, 1989: 201.

<sup>76</sup> Nobori, 1987 [1928]: 49.

<sup>77</sup> Agursky, 1980.

<sup>78</sup> Solzhenitsyn, 1997: 197.

his self-perception<sup>79</sup> and also, to a certain extent, the way in which he was viewed by the ruling elites—including Stalin himself—as late as 1931.<sup>80</sup>

As for the accusations of Orientalism, it is true that his images of exotic Japan, including the all too familiar (to the Western reader) depictions of “butterfly like” Japanese prostitutes, numerous references to the *samurai* spirit and admiring descriptions of Mt Fuji are abundant in the text. Like the Russian symbolist poet Bal’mont, who visited Japan a decade earlier, Pil’niak is fascinated with Japan’s nature, which is “poor and vicious” in spite of the “incomparable beauty” of the Hakone Lake and the beauty of the “holy mountain Fuji.”<sup>81</sup> Depictions of Japanese pagan sexual rituals, the institution of the *geisha*, the abnormal normalcy of the everyday life in the red light district of Tokyo, the Japanese lack of embarrassment concerning physiological needs—all these draw the author’s attention and feature prominently in the narrative.

However, before placing *Roots* within Orientalist literature, it is important to recall Pil’niak’s depictions of the Russian “self.” Said’s notion of Orientalism is essentially based on an opposition and hierarchy between the rational, dynamic and masculine Western “self” and the irrational, static and feminine Oriental “other.” For Pil’niak, however, nature, tradition, women, sex, death and other aspects that fascinate him in Japan also feature prominently in his writings on Russia.<sup>82</sup> According to one of his contemporaries, Pil’niak was very much a “physiological writer,” meaning that in his worldview there was no sharp distinction between humans and animals, both being part of the natural world, the Origin [*pramater*] of all things. He was also attracted to the animalistic truth of life.<sup>83</sup> As argued by another scholar, *The Naked Year*, Pil’niak’s most famous work, perceives nature as the constant, positive value that establishes interpretations of the Russian national character.<sup>84</sup> Love and women are another central theme for Pil’niak’s writings. The depictions of anything related to these were predominantly “physiological,” meaning that sex, including almost pathological depictions often featured in Pil’niak’s works, “overloaded with rapes and sexual acts,”<sup>85</sup> as argued by some contemporary critics. As such, while Pil’niak is fascinated by the cultural, natural and

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<sup>79</sup> Pil’niak, 1990 [1922]; Sarnov, 2009: 286.

<sup>80</sup> Clark, 2007: 178.

<sup>81</sup> Pil’niak, 2004 [1927]: 62–64.

<sup>82</sup> Reck, 1975: 58; Browning, 1985: 79.

<sup>83</sup> Voronsky, 1980 [1923]: 127–128.

<sup>84</sup> Jensen, 1979: 176.

<sup>85</sup> Voronsky, 1980 [1923]: 130–131.

physiological difference of Japan, the rational/emotional, masculine/feminine or dynamic/static dichotomies that constitute the foundation of Orientalist discourse are absent from his narrative. As noted by Dany Savelli, when searching for the “roots” of Japan, Pil’niak is guided by the same principles as in his earlier writings on the national essence of Russia.<sup>86</sup> This begs the question, however, of what contributed to such a striking difference between the *Roots* and the *Diary*. Bearing in mind China’s inherent potential for inducing cultural fascination and the fact that it is China and not Japan that features in Pil’niak’s *The Naked Year* as an embodiment of “Asia,” the difference in structure between the two travelogues becomes mind boggling.

### *Revisiting Roots of the Japanese Sun*

The difference between the two narratives is arguably related to the impossibility of locating the “yellow” but also modern and industrialized Japan within the overlapping taxonomies of class and nation. This, in turn, resulted in the destabilization of the usual dichotomies that define Pil’niak’s writings, namely Russia/West and West/Asia. It is therefore this failure to categorize Japan along familiar lines that accounts for Pil’niak’s inability to understand Japan expressed throughout the text. However “Mr. Smith,” Pil’niak’s usual symbolic representative of the West as well as other carriers of Western culture, does make an occasional appearance in the text. Typical Europeans are depicted as despising Japan and believing that “one Japanese person is an idiot” and “five Japanese together are impossible crooks.” They are infuriated by the uncomfortable and expensive life in Japan and by the general lack of respect towards Europeans. Their hearts and recollections of Japan are full of a “sincere racial hatred.”<sup>87</sup> Mr. Smith is largely interested in the sexual aspects of Japanese culture and expresses excitement about Japanese mixed bathing habits.<sup>88</sup> He is also infuriated with the low quality and lack of originality of the merchandise manufactured in Japan.<sup>89</sup> According to the text, a European sees the Japanese, these “little people with condensed will power and incomprehensible language” as not human but as human-like ants.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Savelli, 2004: 256.

<sup>87</sup> Pil’niak, 2004 [1927]: 81–83.

<sup>88</sup> Pil’niak, 2004 [1927]: 86.

<sup>89</sup> Pil’niak, 2004 [1927]: 100.

<sup>90</sup> Pil’niak, 2004 [1927]: 59.



When compared to the *Diary*, however, these condemnations of Western cultural arrogance are rather rare. Moreover, the contrast between the Europeans and the “self” through the introduction of personal memories or images of Russia, as in the *Diary*, or a distinctively Russian view of Japan are absent from the text. However hesitantly, Pil’niak embraces an European identity, at one point explicitly referring to himself as a European observing the Japanese “other.”<sup>91</sup> He often simply adopts the European interpretations of Japanese culture without making an attempt to distance himself from the “West.” A case in point is the British diplomat’s account of the odd behavior of the Japanese in the immediate aftermath of the Kanto earthquake in 1923. Admittedly, he does at times contest the “European inventions” regarding Japanese culture and language. These contestations, however, are carried out from within a European identity by a better informed traveler, correcting the misconceptions of his predecessors but not contesting the broader worldview.<sup>92</sup>

In his observations of Japan, therefore, Pil’niak identifies himself and Russia with Europe. It is, however, the same “Europe” that features as Russia’s main “other” in all of his other works. The narrative does not seek to establish “Asiatic” common features that could locate Japan and Russia in juxtaposition to the West, but instead falls back on the all too familiar “West/East, never the twain shall meet” dichotomy voiced by Kipling,<sup>93</sup> though without the introduction of a hierarchy between the two that characterizes Orientalist texts.

The roots of this paradoxical identification with the main “other” will become clearer if we recall the visions of Russian national identity and the interpretation of the Russian Revolution shared by Pil’niak and other writers of the 1920s who can be broadly classified as National Bolsheviks. According to Mikhail Agursky, the Russian intellectuals that interpreted or reinterpreted the Bolshevik Revolution as a national event or as a manifestation of the national spirit, differed in their initial philosophical positions but shared a number of important premises in their visions of Russia. They were unified by their messianic belief in Russia’s special destiny, and saw in Russia and the revolution the beginning of a new age of both national and universal transformation, in which a reborn Russia will eventually triumph over a decaying Europe.<sup>94</sup> To a certain extent,

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<sup>91</sup> Pil’niak, 2004 [1927]: 38, 96.

<sup>92</sup> E.g., Pil’niak, 2004 [1927]: 43.

<sup>93</sup> Pil’niak, 2004 [1927]: 17, 19.

<sup>94</sup> Agursky, 1980. Also see Geller and Nekrich, 1995, 150–159.



this vision of Russia has reproduced the paradigms of Russia's pre-revolutionary Slavophile nationalism which was "ethnic, collectivistic and authoritarian" and depended on the rejection of everything Europe stood for. The Russian nation was created as the opposite of Europe and as a collective individual, formed by primordial factors and characterized by the enigmatic "Russian soul" through the deployment of dichotomies such as rational/emotional, materialistic/spiritual and individual/communal.<sup>95</sup>

It is precisely this national essence that Pil'niak discovers in Japan. The similarities between Pil'niak's vision of the Russian national spirit and that of Japan are vivid and present throughout the text. Like Russia, Japan is a symbiosis of old and new, with a heart in the past and a mind in the present.<sup>96</sup> It is precisely the unique quality of Japan's ancient spirit that allowed it to accept modernity.<sup>97</sup> Japanese national psychology, which is the opposite of European psychology in its emphasis on approving the past<sup>98</sup> is identical to the Russia of *The Naked Year* in which the Bolshevik Revolution is seen as an affirmation of Russia's pre-Petrian past. Japan is anti-individualistic and anti-materialistic,<sup>99</sup> it is not rational but smart and intuitive,<sup>100</sup> just like the communal and emotional Russia. Even the idea that Japan has never had its own philosophy and had adopted the practical elements of different philosophical teachings throughout its history, conveyed to Pil'niak by one of his Japanese acquaintances,<sup>101</sup> later appears as a unique element of Russian culture.<sup>102</sup> In a manner similar to the Russia of *The Third Capital*, Japan is a poor country in terms of material resources but has become a "major power" thanks to its "national nerves."<sup>103</sup> Like Russia, Japan's spiritual culture is also far more advanced than the European.<sup>104</sup>

Thus, we can conclude that Pil'niak's Japan is, to paraphrase Stalin, national in form but Russian in content. Bearing in mind Pil'niak's earlier identification of Russia with Asia, it seems that the logical development of the narrative would be towards establishing similarity between Japan and Russia and juxtaposing both nations with the "West." Here, however,

<sup>95</sup> Greenfeld, 1992: 189–274.

<sup>96</sup> Pil'niak, 2004 [1927]: 66, 71.

<sup>97</sup> Pil'niak, 2004 [1927]: 31.

<sup>98</sup> Pil'niak, 2004 [1927]: 32.

<sup>99</sup> Pil'niak, 2004 [1927]: 33–35.

<sup>100</sup> Pil'niak, 2004 [1927]: 47.

<sup>101</sup> Pil'niak, 2004 [1927]: 47–49.

<sup>102</sup> Pil'niak, 2004 [1927]: 224–225.

<sup>103</sup> Pil'niak, 2004 [1927]: 65.

<sup>104</sup> Pil'niak, 2004 [1927]: 65–66.

we must recall the origins of the “Russia as Asia” idea. Russian ‘Asianism’ or ‘Scythianism,’ whose roots go back to nineteenth century emerged and thrived in the context of Russia’s identity construction vis-à-vis its dominant “other,” the West.<sup>105</sup> Through the reversal of the Orientalist hierarchy between the decadent East and the dynamic West, the Scythians, as well as Pil’niak himself argued that Russia possesses the youthful energy that the “old world” lacks by virtue of its Asian roots.<sup>106</sup> Incidentally, in this perception of Russia, Pil’niak shared a common ground with other national Bolsheviks who argued that the revolution was the embodiment of Russian national psychology, and thus an event that could never take place in the West.<sup>107</sup> Pil’niak, however, was probably the only national Bolshevik that engaged not only the Russia/West nexus, but also its complementary binary, Russia/East.

The importance of “Asian Russia” in the writings of the various branches of Russian Asianists was located mainly in the “Russia/West” nexus, driven not by the logic of sameness but by the logic of differentiation. The racist aspect of this logic that attributed immutable and hierarchical characteristics to Russia and the West, however, was also prominent when Russia’s relations with Asia were questioned. As in the writings of Ukhtomsky mentioned above, a racial boundary between Russia and “yellow” Asia was also established, underscoring Russia’s uniqueness. Despite the ostensible affinity with Asia, Russia was represented as being different and superior to both the West and the East. The left leaning spectrum of the Asianist discourse also replicated this hierarchy, albeit in more vague terms. Velimir Khlebnikov, for example, one of the key figures of the early twentieth century Russian avant-garde and inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution, envisaged a spiritual union of Asian nations liberated from Western imperialism. Despite the seemingly egalitarian vision, however, a temporal hierarchy between Russia and the other Asian nations was implied. In Khlebnikov’s “union,” which included the currently “oppressed” nations of China, India, Persia, Siam and Afghanistan, but also Russia, the latter was perceived as the pioneer and carrier of the flame of liberation to be followed by the other nations.<sup>108</sup>

Unlike the semi-colonized and economically stagnant China, Pil’niak encountered an equal of the West in Japan—a nation that managed

<sup>105</sup> For a detailed analysis, see Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 2010.

<sup>106</sup> Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 2010: 225.

<sup>107</sup> Ustryalov, cited in Tolz, 2001: 106.

<sup>108</sup> Khlebnikov, cited in Tartakovsky, 1992.

to maintain its independence and achieve a material modernization. In other words, the “Eastern” Japan had not only replicated what was supposed to be a uniquely Russian experience of achieving Western modernization by non-Western means, but also preceded Russia in doing so. Despite the extensive attention paid to culture in the text, the material aspect of Japanese society is what constitutes the foundation of the narrative. Its centrality in shaping the narrative becomes clear in the question the author poses to himself as the guiding theme for his attempt to understand Japan—the factors that enabled Japan to become one of the major powers.<sup>109</sup>

Furthermore, towards the end of *Roots* Pil’niak summarizes his thoughts and here, for the first and only time, Japan and Russia appear together, both as nations who had learnt from the West.<sup>110</sup> While the text does not elaborate on the exact contents of the main lesson learnt, the answer seems to be rather clear—it is the material aspects of modernity. This passage is also indicative of the reasons that prevented Pil’niak from locating Russia and Japan together in opposition to the West. In the case of China, its semi-colonial, anarchic and economically backward state enabled the recreation of the Bolshevik discourse on class and nation. In the case of the independent, orderly and economically advanced “yellow” Japan that exhibited the same youthful energy that was supposed to characterize Russia, the identification of the two could only occur on a strictly horizontal level. This in turn would imply a negation of the central premise of Pil’niak’s worldview, i.e., Russia’s uniqueness. In order to preserve its uniqueness, therefore, Russia is paradoxically eliminated from the narrative. Russia is thus silently absorbed into the “West,” which in turn is juxtaposed with the “Eastern” Japan. The narrative is explicitly racist, with both “East” and “West” being ascribed certain immutable characteristics. Most importantly, however, it is a rather unique version of racialism, horizontal rather than hierarchical. The absence of Russia that is Pil’niak’s “self” results in the creation of a discourse which discusses races without attempting to position them hierarchically, but simply presenting them as manifestations of difference.

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<sup>109</sup> Pil’niak, 2004 [1927]: 98–99.

<sup>110</sup> Pil’niak, 2004 [1927]: 105.

### Conclusion

It is rather hard to evaluate the influence of Pil'niak's writings on his contemporaries and on the future generations of Soviet people. While arguably one of the key persons of Soviet-Japanese cultural exchanges in the 1920s and early 1930s, and one of the mostly read authors in this period (before he was purged), Pil'niak's works were not published in the Soviet Union until well into the 1970s and even afterwards his name was rarely mentioned in Soviet discourse.<sup>111</sup> His writings on Japan did influence a number of Soviet writers, including Ovchinnikov and his influential *Vetka Sakury* [*A Branch of a Sakura Tree*], originally published in early 1970s. The *Diary*, however, was largely forgotten by both scholars and the general public, possibly due to its seemingly internationalist discourse and its lack of exoticism.

The purpose of this chapter, however, was not to argue for the possible influence of Pil'niak on the Soviet worldview. The texts examined here can be seen as one of the manifestations of the various contradictions implicit in Bolshevik discourse. There is no doubt that Pil'niak's ambivalence in his depictions of both Japan and China can be ascribed to the poetic complexity or versatility of the writer. At the same time, however, the appeal to various taxonomies in his narration of Russia and its "others" voiced by the author echoes the contemporary debates in the Soviet Union, particularly the debates surrounding the two organizing principles of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and early 1930s, i.e., class and nation and the occasional convergence of the two. Pil'niak was in a sense a true Leninist, as the latter had also combined Marxism with nationalism in his discussions of Russia.<sup>112</sup> As such, it can be argued, the National Bolshevism officially adopted as the ruling ideology by Stalin in the 1930s was not simply an alternative to the vague materialism of the post-revolutionary period.<sup>113</sup> It was rather a natural continuation of the debate on Russian identity which attempted to incorporate the notion of the revolution since its earliest days.

The Soviet domestic racialism that ascribed immutable characteristics to certain classes and nations is vividly present in Pil'niak's travelogues. In the *Diary*, "class" and "race" converge in the depiction of the exploitative and white West. On the other hand, the identities of Russia and China, like that of the Soviet proletariat, are mostly social, emerging from their

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<sup>111</sup> Savelli, 2002 [1999].

<sup>112</sup> Tolz, 2001: 106–107.

<sup>113</sup> Brandenberger, 2002.

victimization at the hands of the West. In Japan, however, Pil'niak finds a nation whose categorization is impossible within the Bolshevik parameters of identity. Faced with this dilemma, the narrative recalls the pre-revolutionary dichotomy of East versus West with Russia becoming silent and absorbed by its main "other," the West.

Taken individually, however, hardly any of Pil'niak's ideas examined in this chapter can be considered original. Russian views of Asia have always been rather diverse.<sup>114</sup> The idea of Russia as an Asian nation has been present in the works of numerous Russian thinkers, philosophers and poets, including Pil'niak's contemporaries. These are people like Andrei Bely, Alexander Blok and Velimir Khlebnikov. A fascination with Japan, expressions of affinity with China and a critique of Western style imperialism are also hardly unique elements in Russian debates regarding the Far East. Konstantin Bal'mont, for example, one of the most famous poets of the silver age, whose lectures and writings on Japan possibly inspired Pil'niak was also fascinated with Japan's culture and the beauty of its nature, poetry and women.<sup>115</sup> The uniqueness of Pil'niak's narrative, however, is only apparent when it is taken as a whole. It is unique in its flexibility of moving from one taxonomy to another, from "non-geographical Marxist categories" to racist dichotomies of East and West.<sup>116</sup> This, in turn, has led to the ascription of a number of contradictory identities to Russia—anti-colonial and anti-Western in the *Diary* but Western in the *Roots*."

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<sup>114</sup> Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 2010: 11.

<sup>115</sup> After returning to Russia from Japan in 1916, Bal'mont gave a series of lectures on his impressions of the country, one of which was titled "The Root of the Sun" (Azadovsky and Dyakonova, 1991: 97).

<sup>116</sup> Bassin, 1998: 61.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CLASS, RACE, FLOATING SIGNIFIER: AMERICAN MEDIA IMAGINE THE CHINESE, 1870–1900

Lenore Metrick-Chen

Strangers within our midst are indeed the strangest of all—not because they are so alien, but because they are so close to us.

David Napier<sup>1</sup>

In 1870, the idea of excluding the Chinese from the United States seemed an absurd proposition and an impossible undertaking. The majority of Americans viewed the small group of agitators who clamored for exclusion as disreputable, and patently wrong. Protest against Chinese immigration arose in the west coast states, yet the population of Chinese people was barely statistically significant: in fact, most Americans outside of California had never actually seen a Chinese person. In California, the state with the greatest Chinese immigrant population, the Chinese comprised only a scant 11 percent of the population. And New York state had only 200 Chinese people in total. Yet, despite this, in 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was voted into Federal law. For an anti-Chinese mindset to gain ascendancy in the eastern states, the *image* of Chinese people circulating through the east coast had to radically change. At stake is the question: “For what purposes did Americans image the Chinese?” and its counterpart: “How does one image gain authority?”<sup>2</sup>

The Chinese Exclusion Act signaled a landmark change in American thought: it was the first American policy excluding people on the basis of race or national origin.<sup>3</sup> Through the outcome of the exclusion debate,

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<sup>1</sup> Napier, 1996: 147.

<sup>2</sup> These questions dovetail with James Clifford's (1988: 8) question: “Who has the authority to speak for a group's identity or authenticity?”

<sup>3</sup> The Chinese Exclusion Act was the first American *policy* excluding people *from immigration* on the basis of race. Other types of racial discrimination pre-dated this: African Americans and Amerindians were excluded from citizenship, but in the case of Amerindians, they couldn't be excluded from immigration because they were already in the United States (although the reservation system, of course, was its own form of exclusion). Finally, Africans were forcibly brought to the United States against their will. Most of these were not direct policies formalized in the same manner as Chinese Exclusion.

at the time thought to concern Chinese people only, Congress also delineated and effected all subsequent definitions of who and what is "American." The battle for defining Chineseness was, in essence, also a battle over American self-definition. However, the relation between Chinese and American was not the dichotomy of "self" and "other" (as if a fixed and clearly delineated opposition). The boundaries between identity and difference, "us" and "them," are always transforming. More than merely depicting the American ideas of Chinese people, the Chinese image became a marker in American culture, and a way for other Americans to visualize themselves. Jan Pieterse reminds us that:

Images of otherness relate not merely to control over others but also to self-control. Thus, representations of others relate to power, not merely in the sense of imperial power but also of the disciplinary power exercised by the bourgeoisie within metropolitan society, or power as it permeates the 'society of normalization' ...<sup>4</sup>

In the absence of direct encounters with Chinese people, the idea of "Chinese," strong enough to mandate exclusion, was created largely by the images disseminated by media flowing through America. As emerging market capitalism overturned a worldview based on fixed values and eternal hierarchies, both politics and technology demanded the creation of new media, with the capability to circulate and to be readily replicable.<sup>5</sup> Images of the Chinese, both verbal and visual, became more familiar than actual encounters with Chinese people. Through invention of characteristics labeled "Chinese," and use of the Chinese as a floating signifier, Americans explored new boundaries in the process re-inventing themselves as they changed the nation. At the heart of this chapter is cultural coding. Nineteenth-century American society was unified and coded through media, which set ideas, both in text and in images, zigzagging across the culture.

In this chapter, I examine two innovative nineteenth century media: newspapers, particularly articles from the *New York Times* between 1870 and 1890, and advertising trade cards, created in printing centers in New

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<sup>4</sup> Pieterse, 1995: 233. This view is reinforced by Richard Meyer's (2001: 169) statement that: "these discourses ... map social and sexual anxieties onto cultural and geographical differences."

<sup>5</sup> This is something Marx talks about often. Marx frequently praises the revolutionary and progressive aspects of capitalism—a system of brutal exploitation. The capitalists wish to increase profits. However, in establishing global market relations they inevitably overturn a worldview based on fixed values and eternal hierarchies. This is not their intent but an unavoidable consequence.

York and Boston. Both of these products of nineteenth century technology were emblematic of modernization. Each presented very different signifiers for “Chinese,” creating distinct images of Chineseness for audiences which predominantly had never seen a Chinese person.

Throughout the 1800s, newspapers became increasingly important participants in a national dialogue: at times, a single newspaper had circulation of over one million. Newspapers speak with a language of authority; even when contradictory images of the Chinese emerged through different articles, each bore the stamp of factuality and consensus. The *New York Times* is particularly applicable to this investigation of Chineseness because of its large popular readership and, despite promotion as a Republican paper, its reputation for balance and non-partisanship.

The image of Chinese that emerged from the *Times* was considered moderate. Yet over the period from 1870–1882, the *Times* in effect reduced the different classes of Chinese to one unvaried group: coolies, a derogatory term for Chinese working class men. The few opposing descriptions became buried under the dominant voice that saw coolies as a synecdoche for all Chinese, whether in the United States or within China itself. In this, the newspapers reflected and promoted the dominant political agenda. A single example will suffice: when the Chinese coalition to the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair arrived in the United States, they were stopped at the border. When they were finally admitted, merchants, laborers, and travelers were subjected to sixty-one rules that applied only to Chinese people, and to all Chinese people.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the way the Chinese were treated and perceived in the United States was as a single entity—in effect, they were indistinguishable and interchangeable.

In contrast, a more eclectic idea of Chinese people circulated through advertising trade cards of the same time. While some card images presented scathingly negative sentiments, others hearkened back to an older viewpoint, one that not only admired the Chinese but even mythologized them. Trade cards were the main form of advertising between the 1870s and 1880s; tens of thousands of separate images were printed and millions of cards were circulated. These palm-sized pictures floated through society less formally than did newspapers, and their messages were less didactic. Trade cards were handed out free on street corners by advertising “drummers,” as well as in stores; if they lost something in authority compared to text, they gained in flexibility and their aura of confidentiality. The

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<sup>6</sup> Cassel, 2002: 205.



cards circulated in the market, a part of the informal mass instruction in the new language of modernism emerging in America, yet they promoted private, intimate communications, and encouraged familiarity with the emerging language of paper culture and fluid exchange.

Although only a small percentage of the total, a considerable number of trade cards depicted Chinese people or themes. But a Chinese theme for the image on one side did not indicate that the card advertised a product related to Chinese imports on the other. In fact, most images were created without reference to any particular product. Card manufacturers hired artists who created thousands of images. These would be presented in large albums of trade card prototypes to the potential customer, who would choose from among the thousands of available images. The printed product information would then be added to the card. Frequently, cards with the same pictures advertise different products because different manufacturers were attracted to the same image.

To allow both media their own voice, I have divided this chapter into two parts. At the beginning of the 1870s, most *Times* articles considered coolies as a Chinese *class*. Over the decade the *Times* eventually created a perception of Chinese as a coolie *race*. Through a textual exegesis of the *New York Times* from 1870 to 1882, Part One documents what is tantamount to a nine-step program in the racial construction of “Chineseness”: transforming the image of the Chinese from relatively affirmative descriptions to an increasingly antagonistic portrayal.

Part Two investigates the various significations of Chinese images found on advertising cards. The trade card images are divided into five categories. In two categories, the Chinese are depicted as outsiders: the Chinese figure functions as a *foreign* element, outside American culture. The remaining three categories focus on the Chinese *within* America and their varied significations.

For all media, there is a conundrum between reporting views and forwarding them. The *New York Times* and the advertising cards were not neutral bystanders, merely mirroring the images of Chinese people already in place. Both media emphasized, exaggerated and popularized particular descriptions. Their images of Chinese corrected, amplified, corroborated and contradicted each other. In this chapter, neither medium dominates as the authoritative voice. Instead, they form a kind of duet, sometimes dissonant and discordant, paralleling the confusion and harmonies, attractions and omissions in lived experience.

The two sections testify that by the end of the nineteenth century, the spheres of influence for trade cards and newspaper imagery had become

quite separate. Despite the ubiquity of visual images circulating throughout American culture, the newspaper descriptions ultimately became authoritative; their persuasiveness is reflected in the outcome of the Congressional debates on exclusion. Trade cards images remained less disciplined and unregulated, a vehicle for less authorized explorations.

### *Part One—The New York Times*

#### *The Part Becomes The Whole: Turning Chinese into Coolies*

“Coolie” is not a Chinese classification, but a category that was applied to Chinese people. The term derived from India, referring to a specific kind of Indian servants working for the British. From designating a servant or laborer, it gradually became identified with slavish characteristics, gaining popularity in the United States through its frequent use by anti-Chinese groups desiring to generate anxiety about Chinese people. In the early 1870s Times reporters attempted to find rational and definitive criteria for distinguishing the “coolies” from “regular” Chinese workers. But the distinction proved so evasive that the Times eventually settled on using “coolie” interchangeably with “Chinese.” This synechdotal transformation took less than a decade and was one of the first steps leading to an image of the Chinese for which exclusion could be justified.

*Times* articles indicate that the opposition to Chinese immigration was initially circumscribed within the intensifying dispute between labor and capital. Objection to Chinese workers began as a weapon of the labor movement but objecting to the Chinese on the basis of their labor initially proved ineffective. Employers found much to praise in the Chinese immigrants, describing them as capable workers, especially commendable because of their willingness to work steadily and cheaply. They also praised the Chinese for not forming trade unions. This perception was actually as specious as the negative images: the first group of Chinese workers in the Eastern states went on strike in 1873.<sup>7</sup> However, the contention that Chinese workers created substandard expectations was picked up by savvy politicians in their bids for reelection. By manipulating the Chinese

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<sup>7</sup> “Strike by Chinamen.” 1873. The *Times* reporter supported the Chinese, stating “Mr. Sampson did well in introducing the Chinese, the Sunday school teachers have done well in Christianizing them, and they will do well in demanding good pay and doing honest work.”

image they aspired to gain popular favor by inciting working-class people, most with no previous animosity towards the Chinese.<sup>8</sup>

The labor argument against Chinese had limited efficacy; it appealed primarily to certain members of the laboring class, as well as to inflammatory politicians, leaving the rest of the country indifferent. Many *New York Times* articles concurred with the descriptions voiced in *Our Chinese Immigrants* on July 14, 1870, finding the Chinese to be sober and hardworking, “a docile and peaceable resident,” and calling their condemnation “wholly unnecessary.” These articles echoed the conclusion that “To oppose free immigration would be as futile as ungenerous.” For an American majority to accept the exclusion of an entire nation of people, the opposition to the Chinese had to be restructured: the locus of the dissatisfaction shifted away from labor and towards the Chinese persona itself, which became entirely re-imaged.

### *Hordes*

The east coast promulgated horde imagery as early as 1870. In that year, the *Times* printed a tirade against Chinese immigration written by the ex Governor of New York, Horatio Seymour, describing the threatening Asian invasion.<sup>9</sup> Seymour’s “Letter to the Working Men at Rochester,” reprinted in full by the *Times*, displayed a degree of hostility against the Chinese often ascribed exclusively to Californians. Seymour’s lack of facts added force to his fantasy of a mythic Asian monstrosity against whom the Crispins and other brave souls must battle. Seymour’s letter insinuated an unnamed conspiracy bringing in untold amounts of Chinese, portrayed as an undifferentiated mass of destruction:

Strong influences are at work to open the flood-gates and pour in upon us the worst classes of over-crowded China. They can get to our shores at less cost, and in greater numbers than the people of Europe. If they continue to crowd in, they will overthrow the customs, civilization and religion of the

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<sup>8</sup> The Crispins were a labor organization which was particularly vociferous in advocating Chinese Exclusion. They referred to all Chinese as coolies, which they construed as a debased and inferior class; the argument asserted that the Chinese had a capacity to live unreasonably cheaply by foregoing the most common enjoyments of life. Therefore, they must be nearly non-human.

<sup>9</sup> Horatio Seymour (1810–1886), governor of New York from 1853–55 and from 1863–1865 is currently most renowned for declaring the Emancipation Proclamation unconstitutional. (Wall, 1929).

whole Pacific coast, and they will also crush down the position of laboring classes throughout the country.<sup>10</sup>

He clarified, "I am against this." Seymour exhorted against the Chinese, insinuating that even their votes were anti-American. He condoned violent measures for achieving exclusion, endorsing the ill-treatment of Native American people as a prototype. His viewpoint bears repeating because it presents a justification for excluding the Chinese that has largely been repressed:

Today we are dividing the lands of the native Indians into States, counties and townships. We are driving off from their property the game upon which they live, by railroads. We tell them plainly they must give up their homes and property and live upon corners of their own territories, because they are in the way of our civilization. If we can do this, then we can keep away another form of barbarism which has no right here.<sup>11</sup>

The *Times* reprinted Seymour's diatribes without editorial comment. Nevertheless, the specter of an invading horde did not go unchallenged. Several articles marshaled stereotypes to counter the stereotype of an imminent arrival of Chinese hordes. And in a composite of humanism and prejudice possible only in the nineteenth century, one reporter advanced this reassuring argument: "If we can manage to live with three or four millions of people with black skins, who once were believers in Mumbo Jumbo, we might, perhaps, contrive to get on with as many people with yellow skins who are believers in Confucius."<sup>12</sup>

Despite reassurances, the topic of hordes remained a powerful rhetorical tool. Exclusionists used it to great advantage in the 1882 Congressional Exclusion debates, proselytizing against a threatening Chinese deposition of the United States' white hegemony. The *Times* printed a letter from Congressman Blair, stating: "I do not see how any thoughtful lover of his country can countenance this Mongolian invasion, involving as it does primarily the subversion of our civilization."<sup>13</sup> In response, Senator Brown's argument against exclusion put a rare realistic spin on the chestnut of the imminent invasion of the United States by observing that in actuality

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<sup>10</sup> "Ex-Gov. Seymour on the coolie question—letter to the working men at Rochester." 1870.

<sup>11</sup> "Ex-Gov. Seymour on the coolie question—letter to the working men at Rochester." 1870.

<sup>12</sup> "The coming race." 1873.

<sup>13</sup> "The anti-Chinese agitation. The Hon. Montgomery Blair approves of Senator Miller's recent speech." 1882.

China was already more overwhelmed by the west through telegraph, railroad etc., then the United States ever would be by China.<sup>14</sup> Horde imagery dehumanized Chinese immigrants, characterizing them as a singular violent and mindless entity and persuaded many who might be reluctant to discriminate against individuals to join in protest against the terrifying group. It also helped recast pro-exclusion ideology as self-protection rather than as racism.

### *Barbarity and Contamination*

Tales of Chinese savagery emerged early in the decade, made vivid by salacious detail. An 1873 article titled "A Chinese Murder" gave a lurid account of Chinese barbarity.<sup>15</sup> Beginning with the indictment that "A murder of the most horrible nature was perpetrated at Soochow," the writer described a cannibalistic scene: "They now all set upon the unfortunate person bound to the pillar, biting him over his whole body till dead. When the magistrates arrived, these savages had just finished their devilish work, not having yet had time to wash the blood off their mouths." The entire populace of Soochow became impugned:

Horrible as this affair is, the account of it is told in Soochow from one to another, with a gusto and grin over the whole face, as if it had been a capital joke that had been played. There seems to be no feeling in them; they are hardened, having got used to such scenes, thanks to their paternal Government.

A letter presented by a Pennsylvanian legislator to the House of Representatives, and reprinted in the *Times* on 12 February 1873 indicated the escalation of negative images to national prominence. The legislator brazenly declared Chinese habits to be "so debasing as to insure the demoralization and degradation of all Christian communities brought in contact with them."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "The influx of Chinamen. More speeches on the anti-immigration bill. Senator Brown opposes the bill as a Breach of faith—China in as much danger of being overrun as the United States—Mr. Teller denounces the Chinese." 1882.

<sup>15</sup> "A Chinese murder." 1873.

<sup>16</sup> This was a publication of a petition presented to Congress by Mr. McClelland of Pennsylvania.

*Sex and Drugs*

China and opium were firmly connected in Western minds since the First Opium War (1839–42). However, previous attitudes toward opium use had generally been lenient. The middle of the decade saw a new attitude that viewed opium use and opium users, implicitly defined as all Chinese, as equally immoral. In 1875, a lengthy article assessing the validity of this linkage concluded that more facts were needed before the issue could be resolved.<sup>17</sup> When marshaling criteria against the Chinese, however, facts did not always matter. Antagonistic views of opium were broadcast ever more frequently as a way to condemn the entire Chinese people. For instance, on 6 July 1875 the *Times* reprinted a long article entitled “Chinese Customs. Their Life And Education. The Craving For Opium And Its Effects—Superstition Among Them—A Trick That Prevailed.” With a kind of gusto, the article used opium as one more means to vilify Chinese as a group, equating thievery, stupidity and opium addiction universally with all the Chinese:

The thieving proclivities of the Chinese are generally ascribed to the moral and religious principles of the race and their low mental calibre . . . , which is a great mistake. Investigation will show that nine-tenths of the Chinese criminals in this city are inveterate opium consumers and that it is solely to supply themselves with this drug that they plunder. To be sure, there are many consumers of the drug among the race who are not criminals, but a negative proves nothing.<sup>18</sup>

Additional shock value was provided by graphic newspaper reports of opium use infiltrating the white population. Articles warned that if opium was not banned its use would infiltrate further among the white population.<sup>19</sup> This dire prophecy was repeated in articles describing visits to the sordid New York Chinatown, encountering opium dens, evil Chinese men and young, white, female, prostitute addicts. The accusation of prostitution was another effective weapon for slandering Chinese immigrants: Chinese men were maligned as being lascivious and imagined in the role of pimps and procurers; and the consequences were even more extreme for Chinese women.

All nineteenth century immigrant populations initially had fairly high male to female ratios. Eventually, as women joined the men, the balance

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<sup>17</sup> “Opium.” 1875.

<sup>18</sup> “Chinese customs. Their life And education.” 1875. Reprinted from the *San Francisco Bulletin*.

<sup>19</sup> Reprinted from the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

gradually became equalized. As early as 1874, however, California politicians recognized that the defamation of Chinese women provided an effective weapon for deterring immigration, and they began outrageous accusations defaming all Chinese women as prostitutes. This provocative image quickly influenced the law: seven years before the 1882 exclusion of all Chinese people, Chinese women had already been excluded by the 1875 Page Law. While the law prohibited “immoral” women only—those coming to the United States for “lewd” purposes—the equation between Chinese women and prostitution had become naturalized and the burden of proof was on the female immigrant. Consequently, and unlike other immigrant populations, the Chinese American gender ratio remained extremely skewed for over a century.<sup>20</sup>

Linking Chinese women to prostitution rallied white people on the east coast. Under the auspices of participating in a moral cause, many joined in calling for prohibiting the immigration of all Chinese women.<sup>21</sup> As late as 1880, only two Chinese women lived in New York. Evidently, imaging Chinese women as prostitutes, and men as pimps and slavers effectively curtailed immigration.

### *Ignorance*

Articles in the *New York Times* testify to Americans equivocal relationship with the idea of Chinese intelligence. While exclusionists would have certainly liked simply to disparage the Chinese immigrants as being ignorant (and some articles did just that), the Chinese reputation for mental acuity and philosophical aptitude presented a conundrum. The Chinese tradition emphasizing learnedness, coupled with the current immigrants' desire for education, created a strong positive image particularly resistant to attempts to debase their intelligence. However, this was deftly circumvented by accusing the Chinese not of ignorance but of being too smart and too clever—crossing a line into a devious shrewdness.

Exclusionists worked both sides of the intelligence issue and by 1882 Congressional debates damned the Chinese equally for intelligence and

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<sup>20</sup> Before the enactment of the Page Law, California had attempted exclusion laws of its own, restricting the immigration of “coolies” and “prostitutes” in 1873. However, the Supreme Court found these laws in violation of the Burlingame Treaty and declared them unconstitutional. In 1910, the female to male ratio in the Chinese American population was fifty-three per thousand, a return to nearly 1870 levels.

<sup>21</sup> Hall, 1998: 50.

for idiocy, and contended that Chinese used their intelligence to infect others. In reporting the Senatorial speeches, the *Times* stated:

Mr. Farley expressed his belief that should the Mongolian population increase and the Chinese come in contact with the Africans, the contact would result in demoralization and bloodshed which the laws could not prevent. . . . Mr. Maxey opposed the Chinese because they do not come here to be citizens, because the lower classes of Chinese alone are immigrants, and because by contact they poison the minds of the less intelligent.<sup>22</sup>

How that poisoning was accomplished was never explained.

### *Effeminizing the Chinese Man*

In *Oriental: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*, Robert G. Lee discussed the challenge that Chinese men posed to the white male hegemony through accepting work traditionally relegated to women: "This entry into the domestic sphere not only displaced female labor . . . but, by opening up possibilities for relations of intimacy and desire across race and class, also threatened to disrupt the patriarchal hierarchy . . . The Oriental . . . was constructed as a 'third sex.'" <sup>23</sup> Exclusionists conferred a subversive sexuality on the Chinese male, doubly threatening to white men through its deviation from traditional gendered behavior as well as by creating a perceived intimacy with white women. Indeed, *Times* articles documented this anxiety from a very early date, writing about how Chinese men entered Caucasian domestic space, right into the heart of the home.

The mere thought of such proximity, and the imagination of possible intimacy, threatened the dominion of white male hegemony. In reaction, narratives and caricatures sprung up effeminizing the Chinese male.<sup>24</sup>

Mockery attempted to displace the anxiety created by the troubling sexuality of Chinese men and to reaffirm the white social order. One strategy revised the challenging image of the Asian man by melding his masculine image with the image of femininity. This subordinated him within established gender and social hierarchies while making him the butt of amusement. For example, the awkward humor in three articles appearing on consecutive days attempted to defuse the perceived threat of

<sup>22</sup> "The anti-Chinese agitation. The Hon. Montgomery Blair approves of Senator Miller's recent speech." 1882. This article appeared on page 1.

<sup>23</sup> Lee, 1999: 85, 89.

<sup>24</sup> As James Clifford (1988: 6) observes, this anxiety occurs when "...a troubling outsider turns up *inside* bourgeois domestic space. [S]he cannot be held at a distance."



Chinese men, celebrating their holiday, Monki. The *Times* reporter made the gender conflation explicit, identifying Chinese men with women, and crazy women at that.<sup>25</sup> In one defamatory article, his description appallingly represented the Chinese celebrators as monkeys, alleging that they “danced and grinned and gesticulated to the wheezy, squeaking sounds of an odd-looking fiddle.” But his final image correlated Chinese men with women, through the skirt-like image of their clothes, the effeminate environment of the “ironing apartment,” and finally, bluntly in direct analogy, likening them to “a room full of insane women.”

### *Coolies into Slavery: The Demonized Race*

Although the Chinese people were largely an unknown entity, or perhaps because of this, debasing the entire immigrant body was accomplished without untoward difficulty. At first, the *Times* reporters attempted to find a suitable template upon which to model the unfamiliar Chinese immigrants. Not unexpectedly, the Chinese were placed into categories correlating them with other disenfranchised groups. By 1873, the Chinese had already been compared to “Red Indians,” wayward children needing a thrashing, women and African slaves.<sup>26</sup> The African American template proved most effective, providing exclusionists with their strongest weapon. Through it anti-Chinese Americans found a way to (mis)label these barely known people. Indeed, according to Ronald T. Takaki, the Chinese were subjected to a process of “Negroization,” equating them with stereotyped images of African Americans.<sup>27</sup> By comparing the Chinese with Africans, the parallels fostered a view of the Chinese as a race. In an article on 6 July 1870, “A New Solution of The ‘Servant Girl’ Question,” the reporter tried various tactics for neutralizing the unsettling definition of the Chinese male, among them associating images of the Chinese servant with those of the mythic happy Southern negro:<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> “A Chinese holiday.” 1872.

<sup>26</sup> “A Revolution in China.” 1873; “A new solution of the ‘servant girl’ question.” 1870; “Chinamen Shipped to Punta Arenas as ‘Personal Effects.’” 1873.

<sup>27</sup> Takaki, 1979.

<sup>28</sup> This is a typical role of metaphor, which, as Eric Cheyfitz (1997: 35) points out, was defined by Aristotle in the *Poetics* as, “the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is, proportion.” *Metaphora* comes from the verb *metaphero* [literally, ‘to carry across.’] In the article above, the reporter tried to define the unfamiliar by transporting it to a familiar place.

When 'John' is fairly in the field he will carry everything before him; and Chinese men as waiters, chamber-maids, and cooks, will be as much a part of a well-regulated household as blacks were once at the South. Then will begin a happy day for our long-oppressed mistresses... The 'leading race,' having its domestic affairs arranged by competent persons, will then have brains and vitality to devote to the most important interests, and the world move all the faster and better.

The reporter also drew on the bromide of the servant "coveting... his neighbor's chickens" to heighten the "humorous" correlations between Chinese and African American servants and to accentuate the classification of Chinese along racial lines. Throughout the decade, articles augmented the parallel of coolie and slave; this can be seen even in the title of a report on 16 January 1871, "The Slave Trade Revived," which compared the sordid conditions on ships conveying impoverished Chinese with the African slave trade.

Mystical nationalism is perhaps the best definition of the exclusionist's pronouncement that "The Constitution was ordained and established by white men," and their contention that the white people of California needed protection "against a degrading and destructive association with the inferior race now threatening to overrun them."<sup>29</sup> In response to this rhetorical chaos, Senator Hoar quoted Abraham Lincoln's famous repudiation of slavery; speaking directly about the Chinese exclusion bill, he declared: "If this is not wrong, nothing is wrong."<sup>30</sup> But anti-exclusionist words had little effect. With frank hostility the *Times* itself joined into the hyperbole, rebuffing Hoar's assertions of equal rights.<sup>31</sup> What labor slander had been unable to accomplish was finally achieved by racial imaging, exploiting America's uneasy attitudes toward race and racial mixing. With the success of the Exclusion Act forbidding Chinese from immigrating and denying naturalization to Chinese people in America, we see the triumph of negative imaging. While the category "Chinese" remained, all positive traits were effectively removed from it, leaving only the mythic, slavish coolies.

<sup>29</sup> "Mr. Dawes reading Mr. George's speech." 1882.

<sup>30</sup> "The war on the Chinese another day spent In talk by the Senate. Mr. Dawes argues against the bill—a reply to Mr. George's speech—Mr. Edmunds opposed to Chinese immigration—a vote expected today." 1882.

<sup>31</sup> Source: *New York Times*, 9 May 1882.

*Part Two—Trade Cards*

Politics and Chinese images met again on American advertising trade cards. In the last third of the nineteenth century, innovations in color lithography transformed printing into the media that historian J. Jackson Lears so vividly described as the “carnavalesque commercial vernacular.”<sup>32</sup> This new technology was applied to hand-held chromatic advertisements, creating a riot of colorful images announcing every product and innovation from medications to farm implements.

Not merely a means for advertising merchandise, trade cards were themselves objects of desire, intimate and seductive microcosms of the world of merchandise they promoted.<sup>33</sup> Available free and in multiples, they provided a means for everyone to feel ownership in the new technology and participate in the sense of abundance. To their intended audience these hand-held cards appeared to be gifts, personal pieces of modern America, inviting the possessor into the ever-greater world of things. Although the majority of trade cards imaged familiar and sentimental subjects popular at the time, such as pretty women, sweet children and flowers, an enormous number of cards created new ways of imaging: their sheer inventiveness is staggering. Cards intermixed words and images in strange new ways: bottles became top-hatted men and water pumps sprouted legs, striding in formation across the land (see, Fig. 8.1). Such work defined a new genre, mixing “humor, insanity and drama.”<sup>34</sup>

In the fine arts such experiments occurred only decades later.<sup>35</sup> The cards testify to a wider range of ideas about Chinese people than can be gleaned from the newspapers and to greater diversity in the Americans reception of Chinese people than found in the written record. Certainly, many images are blatantly racist, meant to reinforce the viewpoint of Chinese as debased and alien. This especially applies to depictions of Chinese people eating. They are depicted as greedily lusting for dogs and devouring rats with lunatic expressions (see Fig. 8.2).

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<sup>32</sup> Lears, 1994: 117.

<sup>33</sup> Guy Debord (1994: 15) clarifies this point, stating: “The spectacle is essentially tautological, for the simple reason that its means and its ends are identical.”

<sup>34</sup> Marzio, 1979: 195.

<sup>35</sup> Here I am thinking of surrealist works such as Rene Magritte’s “The Key of Dreams” (1930) or Man Ray’s “Indestructible Objects” (1924).



Fig. 8.1. Trade card advertising "Walker's Pumps."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Source: author's collection.



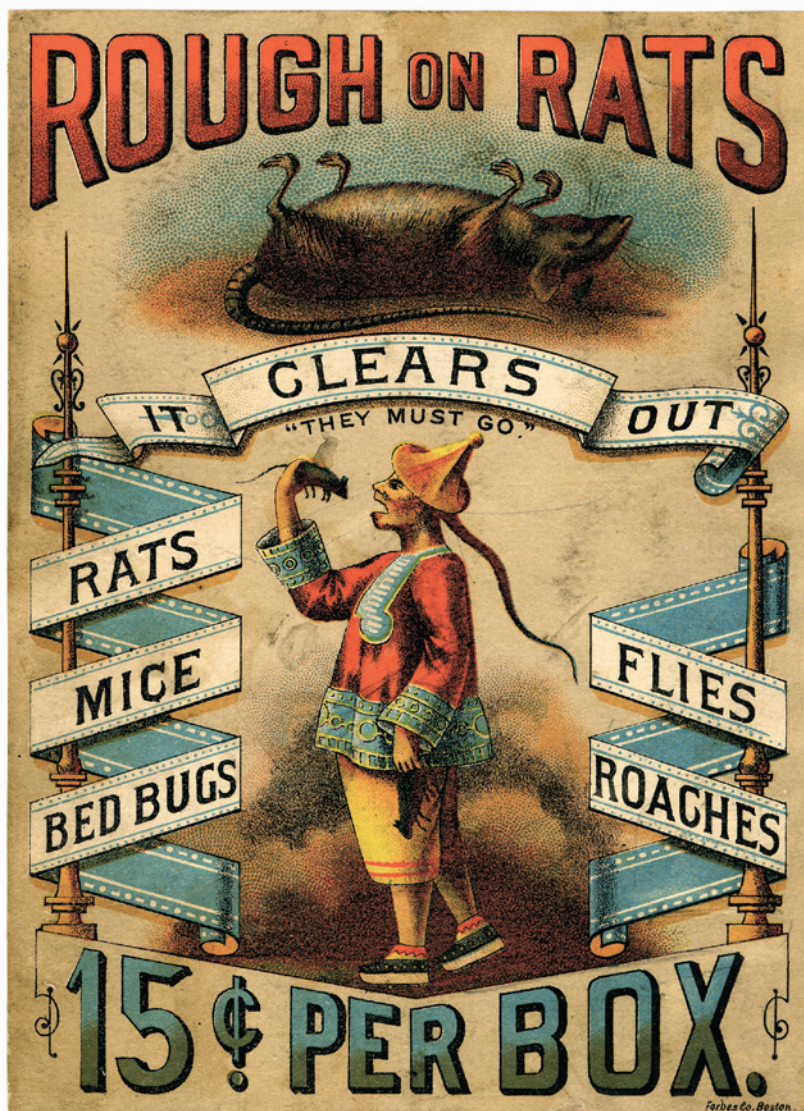


Fig. 8.2. Trade card advertising "Rough on Rats."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Source: author's collection.

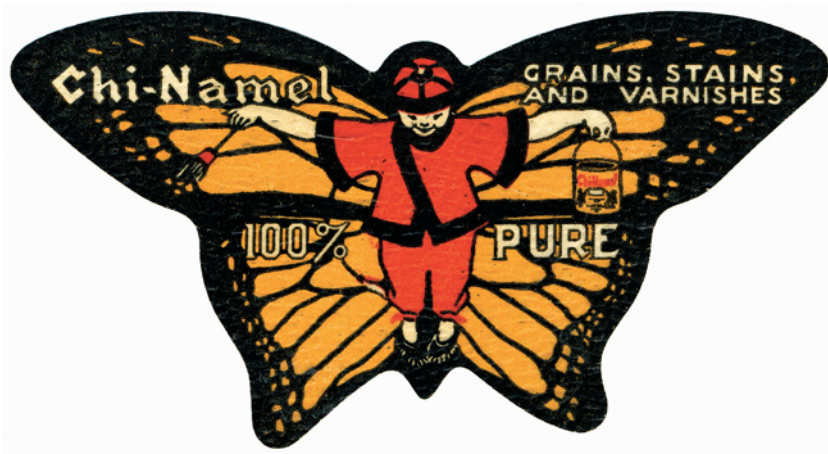


Fig. 8.3. Trade card advertising "Chin-Namel Paints."<sup>38</sup>

On some cards, however, Chinese people appear ethereal and gentle or scholarly. Indeed, a more comprehensive look at trade card pictures of Chinese people discovers a complex iconography ranging from demonic to (relatively) benign and demonstrating the perpetuation of an older American idea of Chinese people that pre-dated Exclusion. In one such trade card, designed specifically for Chi-namel paint, a Chinese man morphs into a butterfly (see Fig. 8.3). Wings outstretched, the figure holds a paint can in one hand and a brush in the other. The caption '100 percent pure' seems equally applicable to this celestial figure as to the product he advertises. Chinese people had long been granted magical qualities as well as artistic ones, creating porcelains that delighted the Western taste for centuries. This and similar cards speak of the endurance of ideas of Chinese people effectively eradicated from the written record in visual imagery.

Anachronisms between image and text are commonplace in trade cards. With the significant exception of laundry products and tea importers, the majority of the goods coupled with Chinese images had utterly no connection with any aspect of a Chinese trade. It requires a step back to remember that advertising a product by portraying the product itself, which now seems implicit, is not natural, but was created.<sup>39</sup> Rather than

<sup>38</sup> Source: author's collection.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Ohmann (1966: 194, 197) succinctly states a similar point: "Ways of connecting image, text, and product that have become second nature over the decades are

attempting the almost certainly unfeasible task of trying to decode the trade card images' relationships to products, it is more valuable to explore the significance of the images in terms of visual language and cultural meanings and to see the Chinese figure as a floating signifier. The Chinese figure in the trade card became a device by which white Americans visualized their own social boundaries and reminded themselves about constraints and control. Chinese imagery provided a means for guardedly exploring cultural transformations: increasing materialism, emerging capitalism and their resulting changes in relationships and values.

### *Paper Nations*

Trade cards not only reflected what was already known; they also helped to construct and familiarize Americans with a new system for visualizing the world. Increased world travel and trade brought the distant close.<sup>40</sup> Separations once imagined as geographically remote were reconstrued as temporally distant.<sup>41</sup> Nineteenth-century theorist Victor Segalen described how colonizing nations imaged the colonized territories as fixed and static in time, "unchanging landscapes that existed in temporalities outside of modernity: vast, ethnographic museums of alien cultures and peoples..."<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Western nations began to characterize colonized and non-Western peoples as the living archaic or primitive cultures. The Chinese distance from the West became imagined temporally as if occupying a prior chronological time. Trade cards reflected this way of exoticizing China, creating images that presented China as an anachronistic space out of phase with the Western modern world.<sup>43</sup>

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nonetheless not natural or inevitable..." He also describes one possible relationship between the image and the product as being that of "the absurd."

<sup>40</sup> Anne McClintock (1995: 38) proposes a new spatialized concept of time, connecting the nineteenth-century theory of evolution to its understanding of geography. As an example, McClintock observes that numerous renderings of the popular notion of a "family of man" took the form of a tree which naturalized the idea of evolution as it hierarchized it. She summarizes this construction: "anatomy becomes an allegory of progress and history is reproduced as a technology of the visible."

<sup>41</sup> Most distant was the time period relegated by Europeans to Africa, which Hegel asserted belonged to "no Historical part of the world... it has no movement or development of time in modernity, marooned and historically abandoned." This is despite the fact that Hegel (1967: 40–41) had not traveled to Africa and only based his judgments, as did many westerners, on the bits and pieces of ephemera that came to the western world.

<sup>42</sup> Harootunian, 2002: ix.

<sup>43</sup> Perhaps the most concise definition of who had and who did not have a history is found in Eric R. Wolf's preface to his *Europe and the People Without History*.





Fig. 8.4. Trade card advertising "Arbuckle Coffee."<sup>44</sup>

Arbuckle Coffee was one of several companies that issued trade card series of foreign countries.<sup>45</sup> Their China card, dated 1893, shows a scene divided into three continuous sections (see Fig. 8.4). In the section on the left, a Chinese man sits in a doorway under an intricate arch playing a stringed instrument. A crescent moon rises over his head. Pink lanterns accent a doorway to an interior room, which constitutes the middle scene: two Chinese men absorbed in a board game; three scrolls hang on the wall behind them. And on the right, in a more interior room, a young boy with an ogreish mask startles a girl playing with a doll. In case the visual message of the Chinese figures' pre-modern leisure passed unnoticed, the text written on the back of the card makes it definitive. The actual product advertising is concluded in several brief sentences. The much larger paragraph entitled "China" furnishes purported "facts" about that nation beginning with the sentences: "China has made less progress than any nation of the world. Yet she possesses a civilization peculiarly her own. Her people are a phlegmatic and meditative race, but not given to independent thought." The hierarchical attitude constructing a flattened idea of a static China depicted in trade cards such as the one above was widely

<sup>44</sup> Source: author's collection.

<sup>45</sup> The card describes that it is one of fifty in the pictorial series "History of the Sports and Pastimes of All Nations."



disseminated on these circulating paper images. Jackson Lears coined the consummate term for this attitude: "imperial primitivism."<sup>46</sup>

### *The Safety of Exotic Distance*

American society, at once anxious and intrigued about miscegenation, explored the parameters between races through visualization. Contrasts between two trade cards with similar iconography demonstrate how meaning was transformed when the Chinese man was recontextualized from "there" to "here." The sexual dynamic between a Chinese male and a woman changes from polite to uncouth with just a few shifts in depiction. The first card shows three Chinese figures. Its simple lines portray a polite, dignified encounter between a Chinese man and two Chinese women carrying parasols (see Fig. 8.5). Drawn with great precision, all three figures appear stately in their elegant, flowing clothing. The man stands to the right, pointed hat in hand (based on some concept of Chinese haberdashery), and bows slightly to the women as they gaze at him courteously. His hair is swept back and smoothly tied. The image sets up a sexual frisson between the man and women, but simultaneously mitigates it through their postures and expressions. Demurely, the women stand together: each becomes the chaperone of the other, diffusing any sense of a tryst. The decorum of the exchange is accentuated by a witness in the form of a small dog standing calmly at attention between the women and the man.

The second card shows a Chinese man and two other figures in almost identical placement and posture to the first group, with one main exception (see Fig. 8.6). A white, upper class woman stands in place of one of the Chinese women. A young ruffian thumbing his nose at the Chinese man has been substituted for the other. With no chaperone to intercede, the sexual drama between the Chinese man and the woman is now unmediated. As in the first card, the man bows but his bow is now imaged as exaggerated and obsequious, as he bends almost horizontally at the waist. Although otherwise dressed entirely in Chinese clothing the man doffs a shiny top hat instead of holding a Chinese hat. Rather than showing his ability to assimilate, the top hat signals his distance from those who have real propriety to such a hat, recklessly exposing the long, raspy queue that snakes freely out behind him. In a caption, his words reiterate this attempt at counterfeit: "Me masheee alle samee mellican man."

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<sup>46</sup> Lears, 1994: 103.

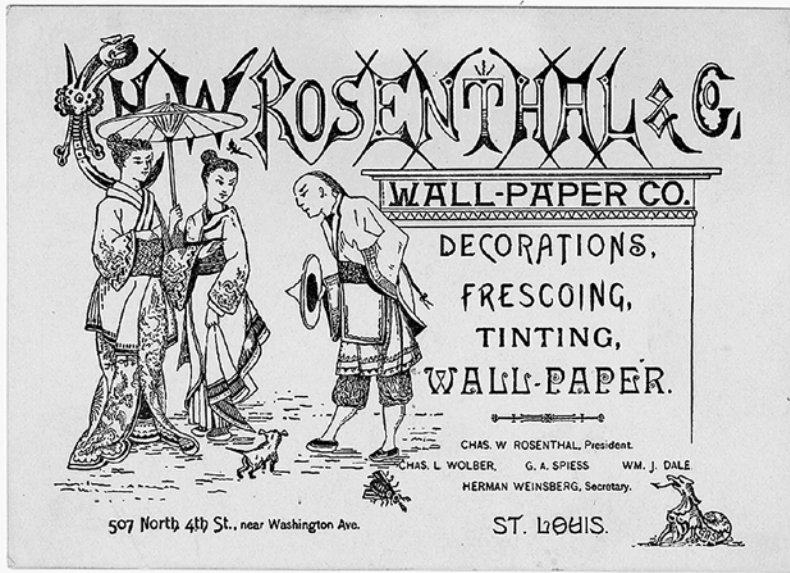


Fig. 8.5. Trade card advertising "Rosenthal and Co. Paper Company."<sup>47</sup>



Fig. 8.6. Trade card advertising "D.B. Simmons Hat Store."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Source: author's collection.

<sup>48</sup> Source: author's collection.

The reaction of the white woman proclaims her disdain. Gazing directly at the Chinese man, she turns her back to him. This places her large bustled derriere in closest proximity to him; in fact, it is at his eye level, on the same horizontal plane as his bowed head. As in the first card, the little dog provides commentary. No longer a docile presence standing equidistant between the male and female figures, the dog, held on a leash by the woman, jumps rambunctiously and yaps at the Chinese man; its excitement augments the inappropriateness and sexualized tension of the encounter. When the Chinese man was relocated to the United States, previously respectable Chinese behavior became a source of mockery, emphasizing differences between gender, race and class. Chinese refinement became counterfeit, civility became parody—especially when a white woman was involved.

### *Permanent Aliens*

Chinese people living in America complicated the idea of who and what was American. They were certainly a part of the new American landscape. But how were the Chinese to be thought of? Could they be accepted as Americans? Being American was perceived as a contract—an agreement to a value system rather than, as in other nations, exclusively a circumstance of birthplace. But there was no consensus about the exact criteria of that value system. Nevertheless, because Americanness was seen as an agreement, it gave rise to the idea of its opposing counterpart—the un-American.<sup>49</sup> No other nation has such a doppelgänger. While people are not French, or not English, or not Chinese, it is impossible to be un-French, or un-Chinese.<sup>50</sup>

Trade cards employed Chinese males to illustrate the opposition of American and un-American. “Alien” is too neutral a word for describing the vicious renderings in some laundry cards portraying Chinese men as lewd and demonic. One card advertising ‘Celluloid Corset Clasps’ depicts three Chinese laundry men cavorting as they wash women’s stained corsets, the reddish color ostensibly rust but suggestive of more intimate body fluids (see Fig. 8.7). All three leer lasciviously, appearing to revel in

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<sup>49</sup> Hobsbawm, 1983: 280.

<sup>50</sup> While the un-American was theoretically defined as someone holding values opposed to the ones heralded in America, it was actually more frequently applied to people who did not share the mainstream’s ethnic heritage or affluence. Not coincidentally, the concept of ‘un-Americanism’ first rose to prominence immediately after the massive influx of Eastern European working class immigrants during the 1860s.



Fig. 8.7. Trade card advertising "Celluloid Corset Clasps."<sup>51</sup>

the abject stains and hold them high for scrutiny, making a spectacle of the private and feminine.

Their figures suggest the female as much as the male body, creating a sexual ambiguity which furthers their deviancy, making even their humanity suspect.<sup>52</sup> We have encountered this category of sexual decadence in the *New York Times* but the card pushes other extremes as well. In addition to their transgendered sexuality, their bodies also assume impossible proportions. A queue defies gravity, extending straight out. Angular and enlarged hands terminate in long claw-like fingers, equating them with rapacious birds of prey and further vilifying them as not quite human and certainly not American. Given such a depiction, no text is necessary to insinuate that the un-American Chinese really must go because of their own deviancy.

Even more demonically, on a large ad created exclusively for "Rough on Rats," a popular brand of rat poison, a Chinese man holds rats in each hand and grins insanely, greedily dangling one rat in front of his mouth

<sup>51</sup> Source: author's collection.

<sup>52</sup> In fact, Richard Meyer (2001: 169) states that in art works coupling sexual deviance with ethnic minorities it was typical: "that the most effete and decadent characters should be presented as foreigners..." In Hogarth's time those foreigners were most frequently Italian.



(see Fig. 8.2). His queue twists behind him, snake-like, visually symmetrical to the rat's tail dangling in front of him. Almost equal in size to the Chinese man is a giant rat, lying dead on its back with its four feet curled up helplessly. Beneath the rat is a facsimile of a banner saying "it clears out" and continuing down the left side of the card the banner enumerates: "rats, mice, bedbugs," and on the right: "flies" and "roaches." Immediately over the man's head, in smaller block letters, placed in quotes and capitalized, is the phrase: "They Must Go." Vermin were an enormous problem in America and became associated with immigrants through the mounds of refuse created by shantytowns and tenements. Hygienic reform was linked with Americanization. Social reformers promoted standards of hygiene derived from private wealthy homes.

Their suggestions for reforms in waste removal involved changing the habits of the poorer classes, mainly immigrants, implying a transformation of American hygienic practices through them. The double entendre of the trade card caption, applying equally to the Chinese man and to the rat prefigures the eugenics laws of the nineteenth century advocating "racial hygiene" and underscores the dehumanizing equation of the image. Situated within American locales, the Chinese imaged in these cards were part of the American scene. In that sense, trade cards reveal that Chinese people did become incorporated into America, but confined to a narrow and racist place—signifying a permanent alien.

### *Disjunctions and Collisions: The Iconography of Displacement*

In postmodern culture, the collision between disparate objects and peoples has become increasingly normalized; we call it globalization. Contrastingly, late nineteenth-century Americans were extremely sensitive to such displacements; in fact, they absolutely reveled in rehearsing them. With great zeal, their images and literature confounded categories and upset hierarchies, visual and otherwise. As early as 1848, the process of capitalism in the western world had been felt as a new and powerful force and described as an "uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation..." The description continued: "All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all newly formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air..."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Marx and Engels, 1848: 63.

The Chinese figure became a vehicle for expressing such dissonances. This shock of the new and the incongruous prompted a peculiar but extremely popular trade card motif depicting unnaturally enlarged heads ripping through a paper scrim, much like those that animals leap through at a circus. One trade card series caricatures marginal types: Irish, Indian, and Jewish—one ethnicity per card. One card in the series shows an enormous Chinese face looking directly at the viewer, grinning as it bursts through the paper circle (see Fig. 8.8).

The image of a permeable, breakable scrim is an evocative visualization of the sensation of displacement and discontinuity. The scrim, the thinnest of veneers both separates and unifies two modalities of existence. These cards visualize the distinctly modern sensation of existing in two places simultaneously. The scrim suggests a carnivalesque exhilaration not only signifying the sudden arrival of the new, but also capturing something of the emotion existing for the first time in history in the potentiality of leaping from one modality to another, one class into another and one world to another. They allude to dislocations that arise both spatially and temporally: of the far suddenly being here and of the past or the future simultaneously existing in the present. One could pass between these worlds, entering with the slightest shift and leaving at will; overlapping realities continuous with each other but remaining discrete. The images helped in the apprehension and domestication of strangeness. Benjamin has the last word: “we penetrate the mystery only to the degree that we recognize it in the everyday world, by virtue of a dialectical optic that perceives the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday.”<sup>54</sup>

### *Hybridity, Incorporation and Cultural Margins*

In the last two cards the Chinese image is coupled with a fine art theme, causing them to reflect and comment upon each other. The cards, however, exhibit almost entirely antithetical attitudes toward their subjects. Together they suggest the wide range in American attitudes toward the cultural transformations occurring in the late nineteenth-century. The United States was both drawn to and derisive of the Aesthetic Movement. In 1882 Oscar Wilde arrived in the United States for a lecture series. Nicknamed the “Apostle of Aestheticism,” he became an infamous figure as he preached his message with outrageous wit, elevating art to a status almost

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<sup>54</sup> Benjamin, 1978: 190.

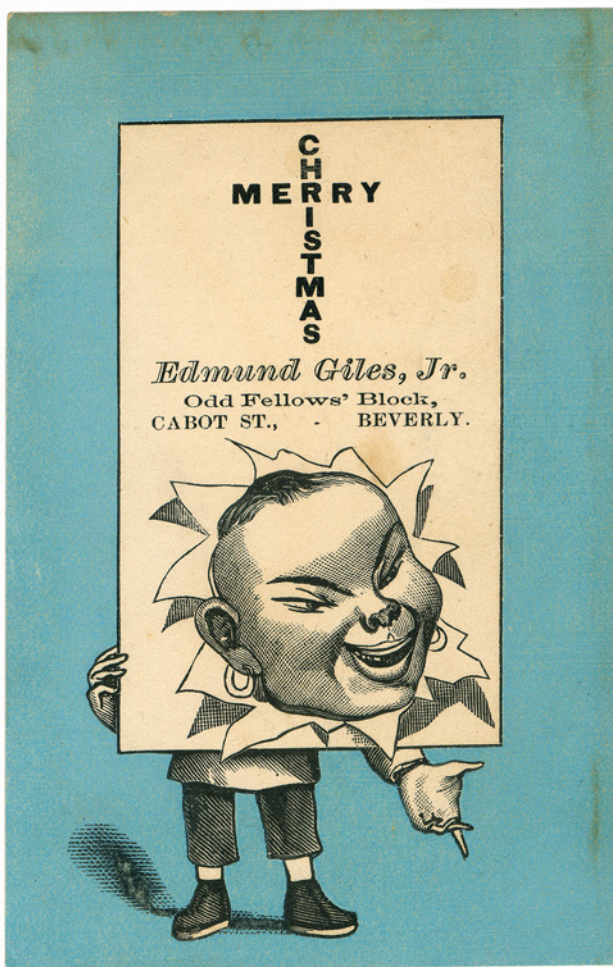


Fig. 8.8. Trade card as a Christmas Greeting.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Source: author's collection.



akin to a spiritual awakening. Both championed and reviled, his aesthetic ideas subversively infiltrated all aspects of American culture: his distinctive idioms were even echoed even by exclusionist congressmen in the 1882 debates on Chinese exclusion.

However, despite its entry into the vernacular consciousness, as an art style Aestheticism met with considerable resistance. The middle class had little desire to learn a new aesthetic language when they had barely acquired ownership of the old. In judging the new art movement by the old standard of perceived morality, most Americans viewed it with suspicion, then laughed at it and rejected it as a sham. They found more satisfaction in sentimental chromolithographs.

The card of interest to us comes from a series devoted to caricatures of Oscar Wilde, with each card depicting him as a member of a different ethnic minority. In this card, he is imaged as a Chinese man (see Fig. 8.9). Through fashioning Wilde's body as Chinese, the drawing references two marginalized classes—aesthetes and Chinese immigrants—at the same time, merging them into one singular individual: a Chinese Oscar Wilde. Reinforcing this amalgamation, the caption across the top of the image reads: "No me likee to callee me Johnnee. Callee me Oscar."<sup>56</sup> Even more outrageously, animalization appears again as Wilde's fingers are stretched to the point of becoming talons, and his trademark sunflower petals are actually rats.

Both the Chinese male figure and Oscar Wilde simultaneously signaled sexual ambiguity and represented an uncertain social standing within society. The Chinese Oscar Wilde stands in a cross-legged version of a contraposto posture, a pose that signifies the anomalous hybrid-sexuality that white Americans associated with both Aesthetes and Chinese.<sup>57</sup> In a manner similar to the emasculation of Chinese males discussed previously in *New York Times* articles, the cards can be read as a manifestation of the white male fear of an unknown and challenging alternative paradigm of maleness—a threat to the prescription of behavior deemed appropriate for a man. Eliding the Chinese with Wilde amplifies the cultural anxiety in the portrait.

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<sup>56</sup> Regenia Gagnier (2000: 91) subtly assesses what Wilde signified in his culture: "the individual in the age of 'personality' in mass culture becomes a stereotype, a representative of a class. Thus Pater becomes the 'Aesthete' and his tastes 'Aestheticism,' [and] Wilde becomes the homosexual or an 'Oscar,'..."

<sup>57</sup> Meyer, 2001: 171. Meyer referred to a figure in Hogarth's "The Analysis of Beauty," Plate 1, 'The Sculptor's Yard,' 1753, a detail of which shows a smiling, effeminate dancing master touching a classical male nude statue.



Fig. 8.9. Unused “Call me Oscar” trade card.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Source: author’s collection.

However, the trade card images take us beyond this unidirectional view. While miscegenation created anxiety, its vision of mixing was also tantalizing. The recurrent feminization of the Chinese male is suggestive not only of anxiety but also of fascination with fluid gender roles. Trade cards fantasized hybridizations of all sorts: people as fruits, women as fish, etc.<sup>59</sup> Pieterse concisely sums up the relationship between the self and the other: "*An ideology of alter involves an ideology of ego. Representations of otherness are therefore also indirectly representations of self. . . . Images of 'others' do not circulate because of their truthfulness but because they reflect the concerns of the image-producers and -consumers.*"<sup>60</sup> Chinese figures offered a means for investigating cultural alternatives explored safely through *visualizations* of male alterity. In the act of imaging a Chinese Wilde, the artist expanded the limits of traditional gendered behavior. Changing Wildes' race shows the need to distance this exploration—to make it Chinese—but manifest the maker's fascination in its expression at the same time.

The last trade card offers a more graceful signification to both the male Chinese figure and to high art: discretely commenting on cultural permeability, intercultural exchange and a movement away from Eurocentrism.<sup>61</sup> The image acknowledges the transnational flow of both people and art between the United States and China drawn simply in a fine black ink line in the visual language of realism (see Fig. 8.10). The surprisingly sweet drawing shows a rear view of a Chinese man with a long queue dressed traditionally in pointed hat and wide ornate pants as he walks alone through a park. On his left stands a statue of an exotic, even fantastical, Asian-style figure, a hybrid portrayal that could only result from a Western conception of an Eastern aesthetic. Placed on a triangular pedestal under a palm tree the statue holds a long fan in one hand and extends the other as if in greeting. The Chinese man smiles and seems to cast a knowing glance in the direction of the figure as he walks by.

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<sup>59</sup> An unusual category of trade card images depicts white people dressed as Chinese, clearly a fascinating and transgressive crossing of boundaries. Interestingly, this antithesis was manifested in the widespread popularity of two characters: Uncle Sam and a black-face minstrel, both played by the popular entertainer Dan Rice in the 1850s and 60s.

<sup>60</sup> Pieterse, 1995: 232–3.

<sup>61</sup> I am grateful to Nancy Ota, Professor of Law at Albany Law School for providing this trade card.



Fig. 8.10. Trade card advertising “J.W. Eggleston and Co. Crockery and Glassware.”<sup>62</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Throughout the nineteenth-century, Americans used the Chinese figure as means for exploring various aspects of their culture. Unlike representations with a single and specific meaning, such as Uncle Sam as a symbol for America, the Chinese figure had a wide range of possible meanings—its meaning floated. However, newspapers eventually settled on a particular negative construction of the Chinese authorized by the dominant class interest and eventually sanctioned by law. Although trade cards also were publically disseminated, they were not perceived as the voice of authority and certainly not the voice of the dominant class. This allowed them to occupy a less mediated realm; their images were not policed. Their pictorial analogies had the freedom to express social explorations and anxieties.

More than other immigrant groups, the visual image of the Chinese male, functioning as a marker of undercurrents and ideas, helped to negotiate changes occurring within American culture. This was due, in part, to the role China and the Chinese have played in the Western imagina-

<sup>62</sup> Source: author's collection.

tion. As François Jullien observed: "China presents a case study through which to contemplate Western thought from the outside . . . A theoretical distancing is desirable—and this is exactly what China offers."<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Americans found unexpected possibilities for probing boundaries and margins of gender, class, nationhood, and even representation itself through the iconography of Chinese figures. An examination of these two media reveals the power of imagery to affect the lives of the people it purportedly represents and the mutability of otherness even when legislated. The act of seeing transforms the seer: at the moment the unknown is first noticed, it merges with the self. Through vision, the outside is taken in and becomes part of the interior landscape, Merleau-Ponty eloquently remarks: "the same thing is both out there in the world and here at the heart of vision . . ."<sup>64</sup> Defining difference through the dialogue between possible and fantastic defines and reveals oneself.

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<sup>63</sup> Jullien, 2000: 9.

<sup>64</sup> Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 166.



## CHAPTER NINE

### RACISM FOR BEGINNERS: CONSTRUCTIONS OF CHINESE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY BELGIAN COMICS

Idesbald Goddeeris

Comics are amidst Belgium's major export products. Some of them are world-famous and have been translated into dozens of languages: Hergé's *Tintin*, Morris' *Lucky Luke*, and Peyo's *Smurfs*. Willy Vandersteen's *Suske and Wiske* is known as *Bob and Bobette* in France, as *Willy and Wanda* in the U.S., as *Spike and Suzy* in the U.K., and as *Ulla and Peter* in Germany. Other comic characters have gained an equal popularity with generations of Belgian readers, albeit without having conquered an international readership: Jef Nys' *Jommeke*, Marc Sleen's *Nero*, and Merho's *Kiekeboe*. Newspapers published comics series every day for decades, using them as a competitive strategy for gaining more readers.<sup>1</sup> On top of that, there were weekly magazines devoted to comics: *Le Journal de Spirou* published by the Dupuis company and *Tintin* published by the Studios Hergé. The stories only appeared in book form after they were serialized in newspapers.

This peculiarly Belgian comic culture has admittedly declined in recent decades. Initially, one tried to stop the development by adapting television and movie characters into comic form (e.g. Willy Linthout's and Urbanus' *Urbanus* and Hec Leemans' *De kampioenen*), but the internet seems to have dealt comics a serious blow. This loss of popularity has also been fueled by increasing ethnic diversity (immigrant children read far fewer post-war comics than native Belgian children) and the decreasing division of society and the media along Socialist, Catholic and other lines. Nevertheless, comics still play a key role in Belgian collective memory. Many Belgian cities have statues or museums devoted to comic heroes. Brussels is proud of its comic murals, has declared 2009 as the year of comics, and claims to be the world capital of comics. Because they were popular among readers of all ages, comics have had a major impact on the creation of images and the perception of foreign cultures and local history. Given their great appeal and their visual character, it is possible

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<sup>1</sup> Baudart, 2005.



to argue that comics, along with youth encyclopedias, were even more influential than novels or newspapers.

The construction of the “other” in comics has already been the subject of scientific research and broad social interest, both in Belgium and abroad. The racism and anti-Semitism that had characterized several major comic authors has gained much attention in particular. In 2007, Hergé’s *Tintin in Congo* was condemned by the U.K. Commission for Racial Equality for its hideous racial prejudice. Tintin’s spiritual father is also accused of anti-Semitism.<sup>2</sup> Marc Sleen, who regularly went on Safari to Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, was censored by his own newspaper when he drew an African politician as a gorilla.<sup>3</sup> In 2010, Willy Vandersteen was identified as the cartoonist of Nazi caricatures that appeared in a Flemish journal during World War II.<sup>4</sup> However, the existing analysis of racism in Belgian comics is limited to the representation of Africans and Jews. This chapter attempts to examine the depiction of China and Chinese in Belgian comics. It will do so chronologically and focus on racist rather than cultural characterizations of the Chinese.

### *Tintin’s Fight with Racism against the Chinese*

One of the main reasons for why the research on images of the Other in comics has been confined to Africans and Jews is *The Blue Lotus* (1934): the first major encounter of a Belgian comic hero with China. With increasing Japanese interference in China lying in the background, Tintin travels to Shanghai in order to fight an international gang of opium dealers which regularly meets in a local opium den, the Blue Lotus. This book is considered a watershed in Hergé’s *oeuvre*. While Tintin’s artistic father had represented other countries in a very stereotypical way in his previous books, he was now praised for the accurate depiction of China.<sup>5</sup> He researched his topic thoroughly and was assisted by Zhang Chongren, a Chinese artist who studied in Brussels between 1931 and 1935. Zhang and Hergé developed a friendship that has fired many people’s imagination:

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<sup>2</sup> Kotek, 1995: 281; Frey, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Kerremans and Lefèvre, 1997: 41.

<sup>4</sup> De Koning, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Van Nieuwenborgh and Chang, 1993; Fresnault-Deruelle, 2006.

Zhang inspired Hergé to create Tintin's new friend Chang and Hergé and Zhang met again in Brussels in 1981.<sup>6</sup>

It was due to Zhang that the image of China in *The Blue Lotus* was very positive. The Chinese are represented as friendly people who have become the victims of Western and Japanese imperialists. Westerners are brutes who do not show any respect for Chinese yet claim to represent a superb western civilization. They collaborate with the Japanese occupier, while Tintin supports the Chinese. Hergé occasionally criticizes Western stereotypes and ignorance of China quite explicitly. When the Belgian detectives Dupond and Dupont disguise themselves as Chinese, they are ridiculed by a Chinese crowd. They appear to have chosen clothes that are considered very Chinese by Westerners but are totally out of date (see Fig. 9.1).

Another illustrative example is the dialogue between Tintin and Chang after the former had saved the latter's life. "Why did you save my life? I thought all white devils were wicked, like those who killed my grandfather and grandmother long ago. During the War of Righteous and Harmonious Fists, my father said."—"The Boxer Rebellion, yes. But Chang, all white men aren't wicked. You see, different peoples don't know enough about each other. Many Europeans still believe that all Chinese are cunning and cruel and wear pigtails, are always inventing tortures and eating rotten eggs and swallows' nests. The same stupid Europeans are quite convinced that all Chinese have tiny feet, and that even now little Chinese girls suffer agonies with bandages designed to prevent their feet from developing normally. They're even convinced that the Chinese rivers are full of unwanted babies thrown in when they are born. So you see, Chang, that's what lots of people believe about China."—"They must be crazy in your country."<sup>7</sup>

The Japanese are also targeted by Hergé. Dealing opium, attempting to kill Tintin, invading the country, and imposing a severe occupation, they are even more blackened than Western imperialists. Interestingly, they are drawn in a different style than the Chinese. The Japanese are given long teeth and mostly look angry, suspicious, or malicious (see Fig. 9.2). Hergé's depiction of the Japanese even caused protests. The Japanese ambassador in Belgium filed a complaint with the Belgian government and a Belgian general who supported the Western collaboration

<sup>6</sup> Farr, 2001; Farr, 2009: 88–197; Goddeeris 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Hergé, 1934: 43.



Fig. 9.1. Dupond and Dupont disguised as Chinese. Down right, Tintin in more common Chinese clothes, his new friend Chang, and his dog Snowy.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Hergé, 1934: 45.

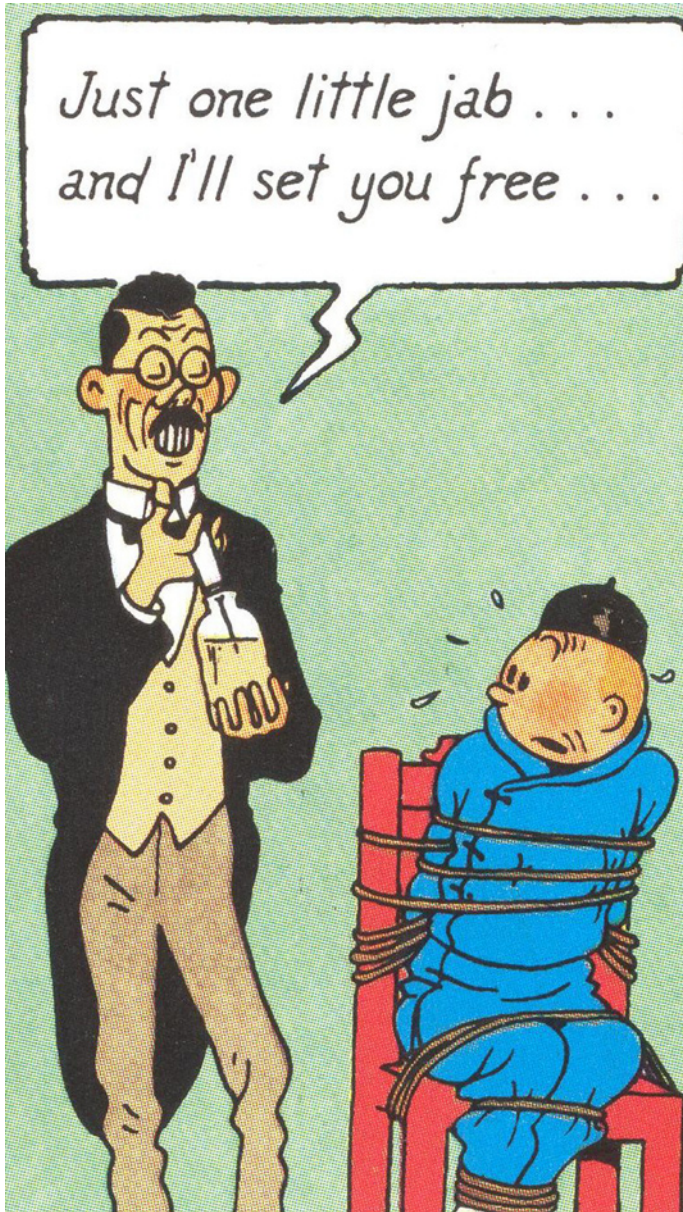


Fig. 9.2. Tintin and Mitsuhirato, the main Japanese villain in *The Blue Lotus*.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Hergé, 1934: 23.



with Manchukuo expressed his concern.<sup>10</sup> Strikingly, these negative characterizations of the Japanese (such as their long teeth) have not yet received scholarly notice—neither in the abundance of books about Hergé, nor in those about the representation of the Other.

*The Japanization of China in the Late 1940s*

New comic books featuring the Chinese appeared immediately after World War II. Hergé's positive and accurate depiction, however, was not continued. On the contrary—the negative features he had attributed to the Japanese were now given to the Chinese. This Japanization of China follows the geopolitical developments of the time: Japan became a Western ally and could not any longer serve as the embodiment of evil and cruelty.<sup>11</sup>

The first signs of this development appeared in the two-volume *The Secret of the Swordfish*, the first two books of the Blake and Mortimer series created by Brussels-based Edgar P. Jacobs.<sup>12</sup> The story sets off with a massive attack by “the yellow empire,” which conquers and subdues the whole world thanks to new nuclear weapons. However, Captain Blake and Professor Mortimer succeed in hiding and secretly finishing a new type of airplane, the so-called *Swordfish*, which they use to defeat the occupier and bring peace. Strikingly, there is no reference to either China or Japan. The realm officially calls itself the “yellow empire” and introduces the “Great-Asian” calendar.<sup>13</sup> Its center is in Tibet: the fictitious emperor Basam-Damdu lives in the famous Potala palace in Lhasa. In the late 1940s, Tibet was still largely autonomous, but it was already indirectly bracketed with China. The emperor resembles Chiang Kai-Shek and his capital is called the new Middle City, alluding to the China's native name—*Zhongguo*, or “Middle Kingdom.”

A year after *The Secret of the Swordfish* began to appear, a new comic series was started by Marc Sleen. In the first two stories, Nero and his fellow detective Van Zwam also fight an Asian character: Matsuoka.<sup>14</sup> The villain is named after Yosuke Matsuoka, the Japanese diplomat who announced his country's departure from the League of Nations in 1933,

<sup>10</sup> Coblenz and Tchang, 2003: 73–75.

<sup>11</sup> Goddeeris, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Jacobs, 1946.

<sup>13</sup> Jacobs, 1946: 64.

<sup>14</sup> Sleen, 1948a; Sleen, 1948b.



Fig. 9.3. Matsuoka: “Come on, Isabelle, I’ll give you an injection with a serum that will make you friendly.” © www.marc-sleen.be.<sup>15</sup>

served as foreign minister in 1940–41 and supported an alliance with Germany and Italy. Matsuoka, however, is often referred to as Chinese, by himself as well as by others. Despite this he is still associated with Japan. As in *The Secret of the Swordfish*, the two countries were confused and East Asia was homogenized.

In 1948, Suske and Wiske also encountered East Asia in the book *The White Owl*. By then, there was less confusion. The story begins with Chinese immigrants in a Belgian port city, undoubtedly Antwerp. They appear to be opium smugglers and kidnap the protagonists to China. Unlike *The Secret of the Swordfish* and the Nero albums featuring Matsuoka, there are no references to World War II. However, the Chinese are once again Japanized. Particular features are clearly inspired by Hergé’s characterization of the Japanese.

<sup>15</sup> Sleen 1948b: 186.

Indeed, it appears that just about all the comic authors in the late 1940s made use of Hergé's interpretation of Japanese peculiarities to reconstruct the Chinese. They provided the Chinese figures with some racist features and some attributes that had been associated with Japanese in the 1930s. The most striking example is the set of long teeth. In *The White Owl*, all the Chinese characters are drawn with long teeth (see Fig. 9.4) with the only exception being a little princess.<sup>16</sup> Matsuoka is also depicted with extremely big teeth (see Fig. 9.3). They are his main feature, and are even visible in the dark when he tries to remain undercover.<sup>17</sup> The authors of *The Secret of the Swordfish* were equally inspired by Hergé: one of the Yellow Empire's collaborators is strikingly similar to the Japanese character Mitsuhirato in *The Blue Lotus* (compare Fig. 9.2 to Fig. 9.5).

The comic creators of the late 1940s also turned the clock back in other fields. While Hergé had denounced Western stereotypes of China, they re-introduced these old clichés. Matsuoka's clothes—his round cap, long coat, and broad sleeves—are similar to the costumes Dupond and Dupont made themselves fools with in China (see Fig. 9.1). In *Suske and Wiske*, pigtails are central, despite Hergé reacting against this. *Suske and Wiske's* friend Lambik becomes half Chinese after smoking magic opium. His new characteristics are quite clichéd. He adds "tsjang tsjang" between his Dutch words, wears old-fashioned Chinese clothes, and grows a pigtail. The Chinese region *Suske and Wiske* find themselves in is inhabited by the Short Tail people. They are subdued by the Long Tails, who had turned all their tea plantations into opium fields and forced all the people into slavery.

Long teeth and pigtails became characteristics as essential as slit-eyes and a yellow skin. The latter originated in the eighteenth century,<sup>18</sup> but was also subject to development in Belgian comics. In *The Blue Lotus*, which first appeared in full color in 1946, all Asians had a skin that was slightly browner than Tintin's. The other books mentioned did not appear in color before the 1960s and the 1970s, but nonetheless alluded to yellow skin. Matsuoka, for example, remarks "Fortunately, I am Chinese, otherwise I would catch jaundice."<sup>19</sup> Blake and Mortimer's enemies are systematically

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<sup>16</sup> Vandersteen, 1948: 33.

<sup>17</sup> Sleen, 1948a: 53.

<sup>18</sup> See Demel, 1992b.

<sup>19</sup> Sleen, 1948a: 54.





Fig. 9.4. A Chinese gang leader in Belgium.<sup>20</sup>  
 © 2012 Standaard Uitgeverij / WPG Uitgevers België nv.

<sup>20</sup> Vandersteen, 1948: 13.



Fig. 9.5. Dr. Sun Fo.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Jacobs, 1946–50, I: 31.

labeled as the “yellows.” The Suske and Wiske book title, *The White Owl*, refers to the difference between yellow and white. Lambik is considered to be the white owl who will save the Short Tails. At the very beginning of the story, he is called “the white son of heaven” upon meeting one of the Chinese characters and returns the greeting to the “yellow brother.”

These racist features are, obviously, not all a part of China’s Japanization. Slit-eyes and yellow skin are considered to be typical of all East Asians, and pigtails and long clothes had also been used by Hergé to evoke Chineseness, albeit in condemnation as incorrect and outdated. Still, some attributes of Hergé’s Japanese are ascribed to the Chinese characters in comic books from the late 1940s. Matsuoka mixes a poison with beer and aspires to turn all the Belgians into slavish soldiers in order to invade the neighboring countries. This reminds us of Hergé’s Mitsuhirato and of other Japanese who also tried to eliminate their adversaries by maddening them. Vandersteen took over the concept of opium.<sup>22</sup> Like *The Blue Lotus*, *The White Owl* features opium dealers running a den where people can smoke pipes while lying on mattresses. However, the drugs are now made and sold by the Chinese and not by the Japanese. The Long Tails grew their opium themselves, using the Short Tails and their captives as slaves. Here, once again, we can see a “total reversal of the image of the Japanese and Chinese,” as Hemant Shah had noticed “in films and, by now, television.”<sup>23</sup>

### *The Proliferation of Chinese . . . Outside China*

Most scholars treat 1949 as a watershed in the Western perception of China, joining the immediate post-war period to the interwar period. In his monograph *Western images of China*, Colin Mackerras does not even elaborate on the 1940s and immediately jumps from the 1930s to the communist period.<sup>24</sup> In Belgian comics, however, images in the late 1940s differed fundamentally from those in the 1930s. The classical Chinese stereotypes which had been criticized by Hergé were re-introduced immediately after World War II. This development continued after Mao’s victory. Comic creators used a wide range of racist constructions to depict Chinese.

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<sup>22</sup> Vandersteen, 1948: 33.

<sup>23</sup> Shah, 2003: online.

<sup>24</sup> Mackerras, 1999.

Comic books featuring China and the Chinese proliferated in the decades following the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Both Nero and Suske and Wiske albums take place in China in 1951.<sup>25</sup> The latter does so after time travelling to the Middle Ages and joining Marco Polo on his journey to the empire of Kublai Khan. The People's Republic of China is ignored in subsequent years. In Sleen's *The Green Chinese* (1954), Nero follows the leading (Chinese) character into Japan. Later, he twice passes Formosa, the colonial name for Taiwan.<sup>26</sup> Yet Taiwan has not taken a central place in Belgian comics. Tibet mattered much more. As early as 1955, the region was briefly mentioned when Suske and Wiske travelled to the Himalayas.<sup>27</sup> A landmark was Hergé's book *Tintin in Tibet* (1958), in which Tintin heads for Tibet in order to find his friend Tchang, with whom he was briefly acquainted during his stay in China in *The Blue Lotus*. After this, Tibet regularly appears as décor for Belgian comic stories, often being imagined extremely positively.<sup>28</sup> However, it is never linked with China and will therefore not be discussed any further in this chapter.

A far more central location in the depiction of China was Hong Kong. The British crown colony was the location of many Chinese adventures during the 1960s and 1970s. One of the first comic heroes to travel to Hong Kong was Spirou, who was created by the French artist Rob-Vel for a new and groundbreaking comic weekly, *Le Journal de Spirou*, and later taken over by the Belgians Jijé and Franquin. In Franquin and Greg's *The Prisoner of Buddha* (1958–1960), Spirou and his sidekick Fantasio save an American professor kidnapped by the Chinese army. They enter the People's Republic of China to rescue the professor but start their search in Hong Kong. During the 1960s, Chinese adventures only took place in Hong Kong. In Vandersteen's *The Golden Circle* (1960), Suske and Wiske travel to Asia in order to collect capsules for healing their dying friend, Professor Barabas, who has distributed the drugs among colleagues in Tokyo, Manila, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Calcutta, and Benares. Their journey somewhat resembles one made by their creator. In the autumn of 1959, Vandersteen made an extensive trip to Alaska, Japan, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Thailand, India, Egypt, and Turkey. He was joined by the Flemish Catholic writer Maria Rosseels, who published their travels in serial form in the leading

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<sup>25</sup> Sleen, 1951; Vandersteen, 1951.

<sup>26</sup> Sleen, 1954b: 97–100; Sleen, 1958: 46, 75.

<sup>27</sup> Vandersteen, 1955.

<sup>28</sup> Vandersteen, 1967b; Gos, 1992.

Flemish daily *De Standaard*.<sup>29</sup> Another Suske and Wiske adventure takes place entirely in Hong Kong—which they enter via Manila—three years later. This is Vandersteen's *The Hissing Sampan* (1963). Another Vandersteen character, Biggles, also travels to Hong Kong.<sup>30</sup> These adventures have equally inspired other authors. During the 1970s, Jommeke's first journey to the Chinese subcontinent was headed towards Hong Kong.<sup>31</sup> The Ming vase in Nero's *The Missing Ming* also comes from Hong Kong.<sup>32</sup>

The People's Republic of China was much more marginal than Hong Kong. It was rarely the setting for a comic story, apart from exceptions such as Tillieux's *Le Chinois à deux roues* (1966). Even then, there is very little contextualization. The first half of *Le Chinois à deux roues* takes place on a mountain route off the beaten track and the second in a smugglers' camp. Chinese were even depicted in America more than they were in the PRC. Nero's *The Woefwasserij* largely takes place in Mexico where two Chinese agents are preparing an assault on the U.S.<sup>33</sup> The most famous Belgian comic series about America, Lucky Luke, features Chinese immigrants in American cowboy cities. Initially, they were restaurant owners,<sup>34</sup> and later mainly launderers<sup>35</sup> or railway construction workers.<sup>36</sup> One story, *The Heritage of Ratanplan*, partly takes place in Virginia City's Chinatown (bracketed together with San Francisco, so perhaps Virginia City, Nevada).<sup>37</sup> The Chinatown is "a district that Westerners better avoid" and its inhabitants are depicted as irritable, deceitful, and threatening. They protect the story's (and the series') villains, the Dalton brothers, who disguise themselves as Chinese and experience funny situations as a result. Their image, however, is not entirely negative. The story often mentions that Chinese immigrants were exploited in America. The story's last page shows the whole city reconciling, the International Hotel housing a Chinese restaurant and the former Chinese secret association's leader Lai Young Liou becoming the town's mayor.

All the other stories featuring Chinese characters take place in Belgium. These often unfold in and around Chinese restaurants. As early as the

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<sup>29</sup> Van Hooydonck, 1994: 205–207; Grossey, 2007: 85–93.

<sup>30</sup> Vandersteen, 1967a.

<sup>31</sup> Nys, 1975a.

<sup>32</sup> Sleen, 1975.

<sup>33</sup> Sleen, 1969.

<sup>34</sup> E.g., Morris, 1951; Morris, 1952.

<sup>35</sup> Morris, 1968.

<sup>36</sup> Morris, 1987.

<sup>37</sup> Morris, 1973.



1940s, *The White Owl* begins in a Chinese restaurant in Antwerp harbor.<sup>38</sup> This later became even more generalized. A Chinese restaurant was often the hideout of a Chinese gang and the start of a new adventure, regularly leading the protagonists to the Far East.<sup>39</sup> But it could also be found in the middle of the adventure,<sup>40</sup> or serve as the setting of a funny story, such as in an early joke in which Jommeke is unable to eat using chopsticks.<sup>41</sup> Chinese restaurants were so frequent that it is possible to argue that during the Mao era Belgian images of China were reduced to little more than Hong Kong and Chinese restaurants. These were the only 'Chinese' places comic authors knew well enough to depict.

### *Chinese Characters and Types during the Mao Era*

Just about all the Chinese characters in the aforementioned comics are bad guys. The mainstream plotline is the heroes' fight against Chinese villains regardless of whether they travel to Asia or remain at home. In Sleen's *The Sources of Sing Song Li* (1951), Nero ends up in a Chinese pagoda where Sing Song Li is collecting drops from a fountain that provides eternal life. Sing Song Li and his servant Piong Piang would first like to torture and kill Nero (see Figs. 9.6 and 9.7), but then give him a drink that makes him walk without stopping. Nero walks back from China to Belgium, but takes the bottle containing the eternal life serum with him. The rest of the story describes how he is pursued by the two Chinese. Three years later, Nero meets another Chinese scoundrel. In Sleen's *The Green Chinese* (1954) the villain steals diamonds wearing a mask with Nero's face, causing Nero's arrest. However, Nero escapes and follows the Green Chinese to Japan. Eventually, they become friends.

Piet Pienter and Bert Bibber, two young men whose stories appeared in the local newspaper *Gazet van Antwerpen* from 1954 onwards, did not travel to China but fought Chinese in Belgium (see Fig. 9.8). In Pom's *Mystery of the Gas Beam* (1960), a Chinese villain leads a gang of two white criminals robbing banks with a new weapon: a gas that makes everyone exposed to it (except the criminals, who have the antidote) fall asleep. In *The Warwinkel Case* (Pom 1969), two Chinese spies steal the plans of another invention: an instrument that can exchange brains.

<sup>38</sup> Vandersteen, 1948.

<sup>39</sup> Sleen, 1954a: 26; Vandersteen, 1963: 2–3.

<sup>40</sup> Pom, 1969: 27–29.

<sup>41</sup> Nys, 1968: 10, compiling older one-page stories.



Fig. 9.6. Sing Song Li threatening Nero. © www.marc-sleen.be.<sup>42</sup>



Fig. 9.7. Piong Piang and Nero: "Now Piong Piang be able to cool down revenge. Piong Piang already missed occasion. Now Piong Piang have very much pleasure."

© www.marc-sleen.be.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Sleen, 1951: 23.

<sup>43</sup> Sleen, 1951: 22.





Fig. 9.8. Bert Bibber facing some Chinese.<sup>44</sup>  
 © 2012 Standaard Uitgeverij / WPG Uitgevers België nv.

Not all the villains are Chinese. In Pom's *Mystery of Gas Beam* (1960), Vandersteen's *The Golden Circle* (1960), and Vandersteen's *The Hissing Sampan* (1963), the real leaders of the gangs are white criminals. However, they are assisted by Chinese collaborators. Moreover, there are no white villains in other stories. In Franquin and Greg's *The Prisoner of Buddha* (1958–1960), it is the PRC army, and thus the Chinese state which kidnaps an American professor. Sleen's *The Woof Laundry* (1969) is a cover for an underground laboratory in Mexico near the U.S. border, where Dr. Hong of Wong and his assistant Hi Sjoë Maike raise millions of tsetse flies planning to release them over the U.S. in order to make the whole country fall asleep and thus conquer it. The “red telephone in Beijing” suggests that the PRC is behind the conspiracy. Nys' *The Yellow Spider* (1975) features a sect in Hong Kong that wants to destroy all the other nations' nuclear bombs in order to have a monopoly and rule the world.

All in all, it is possible to distinguish a number of clear types of Chinese villains. The most frequent is the sect leader. Apart from the Yellow Spider (see Fig. 9.12), examples include Lai Young Liou in Morris' *Ratanplan's Heritage* (see Fig. 9.9), The Mask's agent Cho Wong in Vandersteen's *The Hissing Sampan* (see Fig. 9.10), and Tching Tchang in Vandersteen's *The Golden Circle* (1960). They often look similar, having

<sup>44</sup> Pom, 1960: 20.

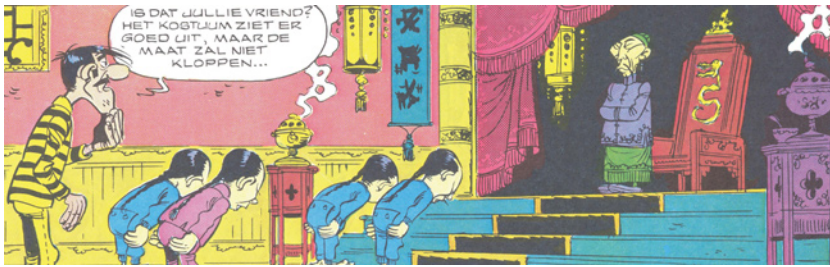


Fig. 9.9. "OK, then we will send your young friends to the spiritual land of the calm dawn."<sup>45</sup>



Fig. 9.10. Cho Wong and the Draken Lady.  
© 2012 Standaard Uitgeverij / WPG Uitgevers België nv.<sup>46</sup>

a small moustache, a sadist glance, and old-styled dress. They are clearly inspired by Fu Manchu, the eponymous villain of the novels by the British writer Sax Rohmer published the 1910s-1930s, and subsequently featured in other novels, comics, and movies becoming the archetype of the Yellow Peril.<sup>47</sup> Another icon of English literary images of China, Dragon Lady,<sup>48</sup> even literally features a Belgian comic book, with only her name being translated into Dutch (*Draken Lady*) (see Fig. 9.10). Like Cho Wong, she is a key agent of The Mask. Another recurring type is the Chinese executioner, mostly bold, stripped to the waist and armed with a broadsword with which he intends to separate heads from bodies (see Figs. 9.11, 9.12).

<sup>45</sup> Morris, 1973: 17A.

<sup>46</sup> Vandersteen, 1963: 37.

<sup>47</sup> Shih, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Caputi and Sagle, 2004.

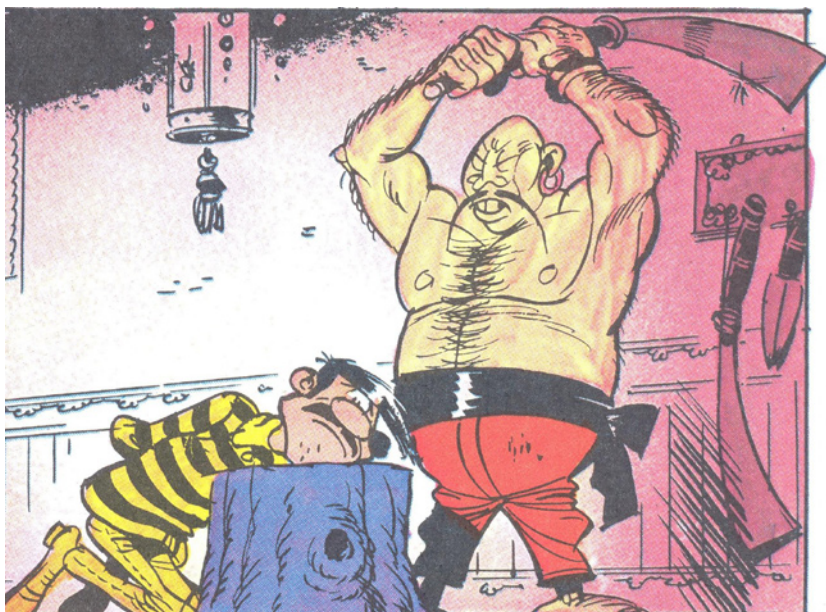


Fig. 9.11. Averell Dalton narrowly avoiding decapitation.<sup>49</sup>

© Mediatoon



Fig. 9.12. The Yellow Spider's leader threatening Professor Gobelijn with the death of Jommeke and Filiberke. © Jef Nys, Ballon Media 2012.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Morris, 1973: 18A.

<sup>50</sup> Nys, 1975a: 39.



OH, FJN ! NU KAN IK MISSCHIEN  
 DLUK UITOEFENEN OP DE  
 KLEINE KOPPIGAALD. NU ZAL HIJ  
 ME DE FOLMULE GEVEN OF  
 ANDELS GAAT ZIJN TANTE EL  
 AAN!

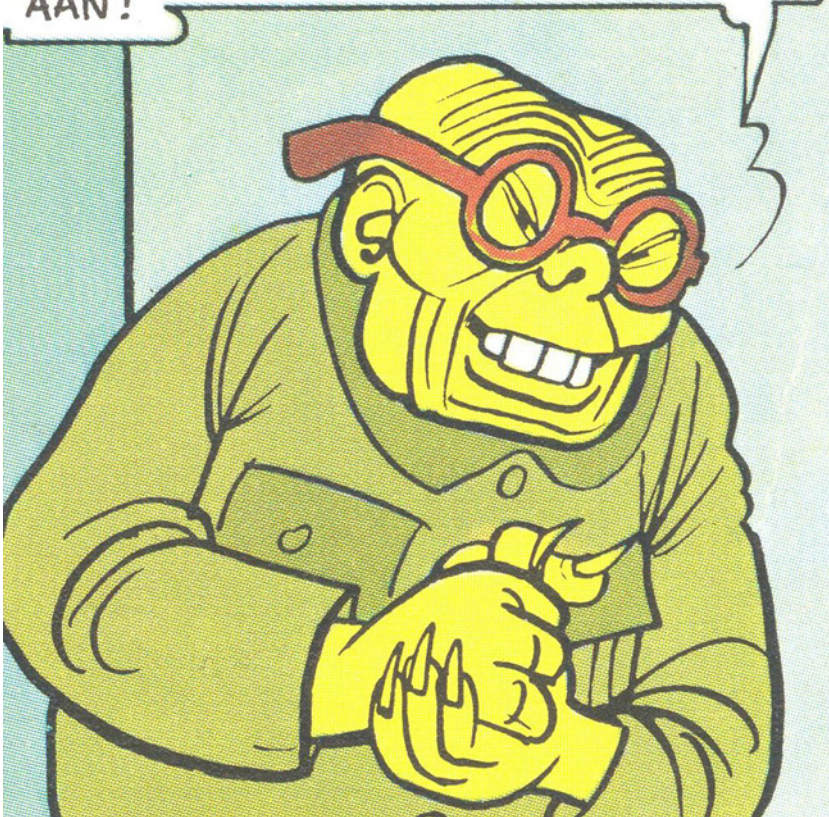


Fig. 9.13. Dr. Hong of Wong, with big teeth and long nails. © [www.marc-sleen.be](http://www.marc-sleen.be).<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Sleen, 1969: 105.



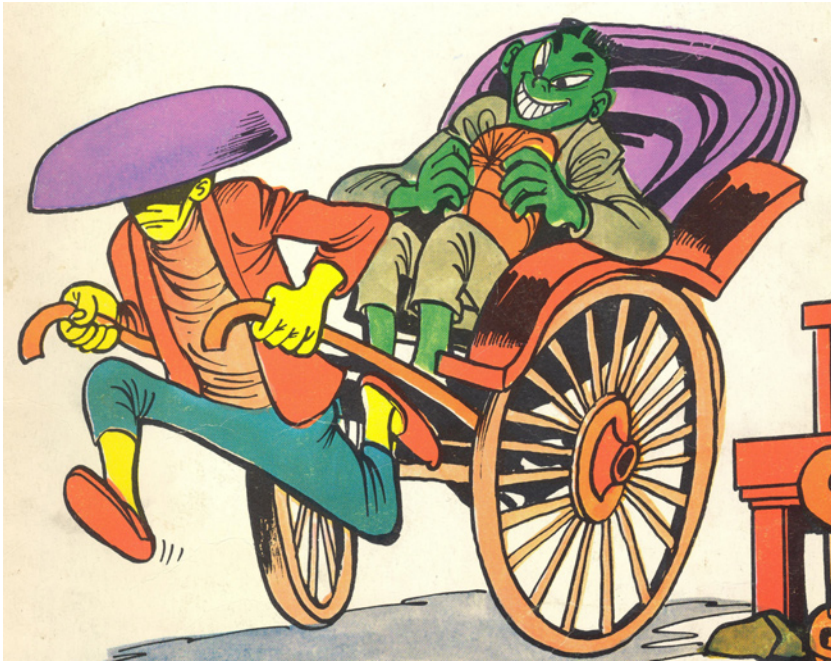


Fig. 9.15. The Green Chinese. © www.marc-sleen.be.<sup>56</sup>

### *The Great Leap Backward*

Innovations eventually appeared. There was more variety in dealing with the Chinese language, Chinese food, and Chinese clothing. However, an even greater number of elements were not original and rather inspired by Hergé's *The Blue Lotus*. In addition, cultural attributes were often used in a racist context and once again stereotyped or denigrated the Chinese. Generally speaking, the construction of Chinese in Belgian comics of the Mao era was a Great Leap Backward. While Hergé had called for accuracy, his successors reverted to clichés.

Indeed, a Chinese atmosphere was evoked by a striking number of recurring objects or contexts, often borrowed from Hergé. Many of the comic heroes travel through the city of Hong Kong in a rickshaw, just as Tintin had done in Shanghai.<sup>57</sup> Many of them also hide in large vases,

<sup>56</sup> Sleen, 1954a: front cover.

<sup>57</sup> Sleen, 1951; Vandersteen, 1960: 26; Vandersteen, 1963: 28; Nys, 1975a: 29.

like Tintin on *The Blue Lotus*' front cover.<sup>58</sup> Sleen's *The Missing Ming* is even about a high-priced and century old vase that is accidentally stolen by Nero and appears to contain a manual to eternal happiness: a little Chinese person who lives in the vase.<sup>59</sup> Interestingly, many of these vases have a lid, although this is not customary in China. These lids undoubtedly existed to cover their content: not just people, but also often a broadsword.<sup>60</sup> Chinese sabers or *daos* were indeed frequently used by the bad Chinese characters attempting to decapitate the comic heroes, just as Tintin was almost beheaded in a similar fashion (see Figs. 9.11 and 9.12).<sup>61</sup>

Hergé's inspiration is also visible in the numerous sects and secret societies occurring in the books under discussion. Vandersteen even satirizes this with Wiske fighting three sects: The Evil Eye, the Blue Eye, and the Green Eye.<sup>62</sup> The Virginia City Chinese also have their secret association (see Fig. 9.9) and even the eponymous organization in Nys' *The Yellow Spider* (1975) can be considered a secret association.<sup>63</sup> Located in the Dragon House, their name refers to the icon on *The Blue Lotus*' front cover. This is not unique. The first thing Nero sees after his arrival in China is a wooden dragon adorning the front door of a pagoda.<sup>64</sup> In *The Hissing Sampan*, firedrakes which are actually camouflaged tanks, guard the kidnapped children working in the opium fields.<sup>65</sup> Opium, finally, is probably the most frequent Chinese image, occurring in almost every book we have discussed.<sup>66</sup>

There are new attributes too. Vandersteen is clearly fascinated by Chinese boats, drawing both junks and sampans. Having travelled to East Asia, he is also far better acquainted with the Chinese cuisine. Wiske orders bird's nest and shark-fin soup.<sup>67</sup> Marc Sleen is also familiar with food, featuring several kinds of duck dishes: duck with plums, duck with pineapples, and crispy aromatic duck.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, some clichés persist.

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<sup>58</sup> Vandersteen, 1960: 30.

<sup>59</sup> Sleen, 1975.

<sup>60</sup> Sleen, 1951: 22; Vandersteen, 1963: 38.

<sup>61</sup> See also Vandersteen, 1960: 27; Vandersteen, 1963: 53.

<sup>62</sup> Vandersteen, 1960: 28.

<sup>63</sup> See also Morris, 1973: 16B.

<sup>64</sup> Sleen, 1951: 14–20.

<sup>65</sup> Vandersteen, 1963: 50.

<sup>66</sup> Sleen, 1951: 71; Sleen, 1954a: 39; Vandersteen, 1963: 37; Sleen, 1969: 47; Nys, 1975a: 26.

<sup>67</sup> Vandersteen, 1960: 29.

<sup>68</sup> Sleen, 1969: 111, 98, 53.



Averell Dalton's first association with the Chinese is that they eat dogs.<sup>69</sup> Many other authors limit Chinese food to chopsticks, rice and jasmine tea.<sup>70</sup> They erroneously draw Chinese as eating nothing but rice, like Belgians who eat French fries without meat or vegetables.<sup>71</sup> They might also confuse Chinese food with Indonesian food, which is historically more familiar to Dutch speaking readers. Sleen mentions *rijsttafel* (which literally translates to "rice table"); Tillieux mentions *lumpia*, the Indonesian and Vietnamese version of spring rolls.<sup>72</sup> The latter is the proper name of one of the Chinese characters, with a friend called Li-sji [lychee].<sup>73</sup>

Confusion between China and other East Asian countries also exists in other fields. For example, Chinese characters are often associated with martial arts. Even Chinese women and children are depicted as being able to floor their white adversaries (see Fig. 9.14).<sup>74</sup> However, the martial art used was usually jujutsu, and occasionally judo and karate, two quintessentially Japanese martial arts.<sup>75</sup> Clothing is also noteworthy in this respect. This aspect of Chinese representation is quite varied. Many Chinese characters in Western Europe adapt to their environment and wear a suit or a shirt.<sup>76</sup> Their PRC compatriots wear Mao suits.<sup>77</sup> People in Hong Kong are also often drawn with trousers and shirts, sometimes wearing conical Asian hats.<sup>78</sup> The old styles are nonetheless quite prevalent. Many Chinese still wear Qing style clothing: long clothes and a small cap (an officer or mandarin cap) or a bold head with a long pigtail.<sup>79</sup> Admittedly, this is often in a particular context, such as the little Chinese person in the Ming vase (who might have come from the past; see Fig. 9.14) and the members of the Yellow Spider (see Fig. 9.12), as well as the aforementioned sect leaders. Nevertheless, this again shows that it took some time before Hergé's criticism of distorted Western images of China found favor in the West.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Morris, 1973: 13B.

<sup>70</sup> Morris, 1973: 20A, 32A–B; Vandersteen, 1963: 43; Tillieux, 1973: 32; Nys, 1968: 10.

<sup>71</sup> Sleen, 1954a: 161; Franquin and Greg, 1958–1960: 42; Nys, 1968: 10.

<sup>72</sup> Tillieux, 1973: 34.

<sup>73</sup> Sleen, 1969: 98; Tillieux, 1973: 34.

<sup>74</sup> See also Sleen, 1969: 64; Sleen, 1975: 73–74, 102–103.

<sup>75</sup> For jujutsu, see Sleen 1951: 84, 100; Pom, 1960: 17, 31; Sleen, 1954a: 73; for judo and karate, see Sleen 1969: 45.

<sup>76</sup> E.g., Pom, 1960.

<sup>77</sup> Tillieux, 1973 and Franquin and Greg, 1958–1960.

<sup>78</sup> See Vandersteen, 1963.

<sup>79</sup> Sleen, 1951: 70; Sleen, 1954a: 26; Nys, 1968: 10.

<sup>80</sup> Goddeeris, 2011.

The Chinese language was also used for distinction and negative representation. Some Chinese spoke in broken Dutch, for example, in which no verbs were conjugated (see Fig. 9.7).<sup>81</sup> Others used an abundance of adjectives. This occasionally made their language more poetic, but could also highlight Chinese untruthfulness or obsequies.<sup>82</sup> In addition, the Chinese language itself was often reduced to chung-chong-chang-ching or wong-wang sounds. Other authors, such as Jef Nys, emphasized the Chinese inability to pronounce "r"s and systematically replace them with "l"s.<sup>83</sup> This sometimes gives rise to funny situations, such as when a Chinese directs the heroes to the mountains—*bergen* in Dutch but now *belgen*, which means Belgians.<sup>84</sup> Finally, sounds were sometimes transcribed in fictional Chinese characters (see Fig. 9.8). This too was not complimentary: the characters did not correspond to the real Chinese script and were also used to evoke curses by white men. In this respect, they were bracketed together with skulls and other clichés of nastiness.

China's relation with the West and the interpretation of colonialism had also changed. While Hergé had criticized the British imperialists (as well as the Japanese occupiers) and had sympathized with the Chinese, Vandersteen clearly does the opposite: he blackens the Chinese and supports the British. Like Tintin in his first encounter with Shanghai, Wiske explores Hong Kong from her rickshaw. The first Chinese she sees is a poor little shoeshine boy who is beaten by a client because he soiled his trousers. This is similar to Tintin, who witnesses how his rickshaw driver runs into a man that subsequently beats him. Both Tintin and Wiske intervene. However, Tintin fights a Western bully and Wiske a Chinese one.<sup>85</sup>

Three years later, Vandersteen is clearly concerned about the humanitarian situation in Hong Kong. A British intelligence officer convinces Suske, Wiske, and their friends Sidonia, Jerom, and Lambik to assist him in the struggle against The Mask by referring to the misery in Hong Kong, where "millions of people are starving."<sup>86</sup> After their arrival, the comic heroes are repeatedly confronted with human misery on sampans and in slums.<sup>87</sup> Other scholars refer to *The Hissing Sampan's* "[a] sharp political message" and "[a] pretty realistically outlined milieu of Chinese refugees in Hong

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<sup>81</sup> E.g., Sleen, 1954a.

<sup>82</sup> Morris, 1973: 20A.

<sup>83</sup> See also in Vandersteen, 1960; Sleen, 1969.

<sup>84</sup> Nys, 1975: 29.

<sup>85</sup> Vandersteen, 1960: 26–27.

<sup>86</sup> Vandersteen, 1963: 10.

<sup>87</sup> Vandersteen, 1963: 24, 26–29, 31, 44–45.

Kong.”<sup>88</sup> However, they do not see that Vandersteen still supports the Western occupation of Hong Kong. Indeed, “the West wants to aid the underfed” but is sabotaged by The Mask’s opium.<sup>89</sup> The poppy fields are just across the Hong Kong border, in a Forbidden Zone that Hong Kong officials are not allowed to enter due to an official agreement.<sup>90</sup> In other words, the nineteenth century is reversed. China is now the opium producer and Great Britain the one who fights it.

Vandersteen’s *The Hissing Sampan* is undoubtedly the most politically committed comic book about Mao-era China. Marc Sleen also regularly refers to the political situation, but does so without much engagement, despite publishing in a Catholic newspaper and being obviously anti-Communist. In 1951, he draws Russians in China stating that “we do what we want here.”<sup>91</sup> In 1954, the Green Chinese moves to Japan because “the proletarians would not admit me with my fortune.”<sup>92</sup> Much later, in 1972, he begins his book with world leaders Nixon, Brezhnev, Hirohito, and Mao discussing how they can eliminate Nero’s son Adhemar. Nixon suggests bribing him, the Russians abducting him, and “our yellow comrades could brainwash him.”<sup>93</sup>

Sleen’s most committed book featuring the PRC is *The Woof Laundry* (1969). Dr. Hong of Wong and his assistant Hi Sjoë Maike are rabid Communists, having Mao’s portrait on their wall, fighting the “hated Capitalists,” and referring to each other as “comrade.”<sup>94</sup> When Adhemar refuses to disclose the formula for the quick breeding of tsetse flies, Dr. Hong starts to rant and rave: “You dirty capitalist! Colonial extortionist! Prototype of a social democrat with anti-revisionist tendencies!”<sup>95</sup> Strikingly, Dr. Hong and Hi Sjoë Maike regularly interrupt their activities in order to read or to recite from Mao’s *Little Red Book* (see Fig. 9.16). This happens on almost every page they are in, which makes them mad fanatics. Mao’s sayings are written in Chinese characters, with only one alleged quotation being translated: “If a woman talks to you, smile...don’t answer.”<sup>96</sup> The same obsession with the Great Helmsman is depicted in another book from 1969. The two Chinese spies constantly use aphorisms that are attributed to the “great leader Lao Tsjing Boem.” Some of them

<sup>88</sup> Braet, 2010: 46, 49.

<sup>89</sup> Vandersteen, 1963: 29.

<sup>90</sup> Vandersteen, 1963: 49.

<sup>91</sup> Vandersteen, 1951: 73.

<sup>92</sup> Vandersteen, 1954: 32.

<sup>93</sup> Sleen, 1972: 3–4.

<sup>94</sup> Sleen, 1969: 16, 17, 48.

<sup>95</sup> Sleen, 1969: 112.

<sup>96</sup> Sleen, 1969: 110.



Fig. 9.16. “Sure, Dr. Hong, but let us first recite The Little Red Book together”—  
Dr. Hong of Wong and Hi Sjoë Maïke. © [www.marc-sleen.be](http://www.marc-sleen.be).<sup>97</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Sleen, 1969: 23.

are common proverbs: "A lost battle is not a lost war" or "don't wait until tomorrow to do what you can do today."<sup>98</sup> Similarly, they refer to events as occurring before and after the great revolution.<sup>99</sup>

### *The Gradual Opening*

This image of the chanting Chinese permanently referring to his Great Leader is obviously related to Mao's great socio-political programs of the 1960s such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. However the image begins to disappear as early as the first half of the 1970s. Lai Long Liou, the president of the Chinatown association, quotes Confucius, not Mao.<sup>100</sup> Tsoeng Wong Si Wong, the little Chinese person in the Ming vase, does so even more frequently. Interestingly, one of the Confucius quotes is identical to a Mao quote: "If a woman talks to you, smile . . . don't answer."<sup>101</sup> Naturally, this use of Confucius can also be explained by the fact that both Chinese are related to the past. Lucky Luke's stories occur during the nineteenth century and the little Chinese person is unconsciously associated with the Ming period. Still, it is quite striking that there are no more references to Mao as early as 1973. Other changes are also visible. The Chinese hero of *The Missing Ming* is a positive character and not the usual bad guy. A historical background is given for the first time since the 1940s. The antique dealer explains that the Ming dynasty ruled China between 1368–1644 and Nero's friend Petoetje explains Confucius as "Chinese philosopher, 551–479 BCE."<sup>102</sup> It appears that the comic books' authors realized by then that they had depicted China in stereotypes and would now like to return to the facts.

This tendency continues in the subsequent decades. This, at least, is the impression one gets at first glance, which should be confirmed by a more comprehensive analysis. An increasing number of later comic books depict the Chinese in a positive manner. More and more protagonists travel to China, meet with good Chinese and are fascinated by Chinese history. Alix, a character living in the Roman empire in the first century BCE goes to China and becomes friends with the heir to the Chinese throne.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Pom, 1969: 19.

<sup>99</sup> Sleen, 1969: 20.

<sup>100</sup> Morris, 1973: 40A.

<sup>101</sup> Sleen, 1975: 62.

<sup>102</sup> Sleen, 1975: 25, 57.

<sup>103</sup> Martin, 1983.



Suske and Wiske end up in ancient China twice.<sup>104</sup> Jommeke flies to China where he finds Genghis Khan's treasure in the Great Wall the gratitude of the Chinese authorities.<sup>105</sup> Kiekeboe, a more recent popular comic figure, also meets with Chinese immigrants in *The Wokchinesees* (The Wok Chinese, 2007). Several details suggest a more respectful depiction of the Chinese: Chinese characters are written accurately, Kiekeboe's wife is enrolled in a Chinese cooking course, and a friend of Kiekeboe's daughter has a Chinese boyfriend. Similarly, Suske falls in love with a Chinese girl, Jung Ding [literally: Young Thing]. By the twenty first century, an inter-ethnic romantic relationship is apparently not considered abnormal.

Some old images still persist, however. Most of the Chinese in Kiekeboe's comics are members of a mafia gang—the title itself (*Wokchinesees*) is a play on *gokchinesees* ["betting Chinese," the alias of Ye Zheyun, who was the key suspect in a Belgian betting scandal in 2005]. All are still drawn with 1940s-style long teeth (see Fig. 9.17). Many other clichés, from laundry to dragons, can also be found. Suske and Wiske fight members of the Chinese mafia, such as a pack of Chinese contrabandists in Indonesia who illegally trade birds of paradise.<sup>106</sup>

There is little development in other books too. In 2002, Nero's son was once again kidnapped by the Chinese authorities. Nero travels to Beijing and confronts a totalitarian and corrupt regime.<sup>107</sup> Strikingly, Matsuoka re-enters the scene in three books after a 45 year absence.<sup>108</sup> Jommeke fights Chinese bank robbers and pirates' descendants,<sup>109</sup> once again depicted with bald heads, rabbit teeth, and a long, thin moustache. The classic types of Chinese villains still appear. "The yellow shadow" in *Bob Morane* is clearly inspired by Fu Manchu.<sup>110</sup> The same goes for Wu Manchu in the (Dutch) comic series *Agent 327*, only now she is woman who

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<sup>104</sup> Vandersteen, 2008.

<sup>105</sup> Nys, 1986.

<sup>106</sup> Vandersteen, 1992b.

<sup>107</sup> Sleen, 2002a.

<sup>108</sup> Sleen, 1992; Sleen, 1996; Sleen, 2002b.

<sup>109</sup> Nys, 1975b, 1977, respectively.

<sup>110</sup> E.g., Vernes 1999, but also in several earlier albums.



Fig. 9.17. A Western girl and her Chinese boyfriend in *Kiekeboe*.  
© 2012 Standaard Uitgeverij/WPG Uitgevers België nv.<sup>111</sup>

(obviously) resembles Dragon Lady.<sup>112</sup> Similarly, the Chinese actors in *De Rode Ridder* [The Red Knight] are a hodge-podge of Asian stereotypes: from dragons to martial arts, through long teeth and bald heads, to slyness and cruelty.<sup>113</sup> All in all, it is clear that racist stereotypes have largely prevailed and that the rapprochement between China and Europe has only slowly affected the construction of Chinese characters in Belgian comics.

<sup>111</sup> Merho, 2007: 4.

<sup>112</sup> Lodewijk, 1981.

<sup>113</sup> Vandersteen, 1976; Vandersteen, 1998a; Vandersteen, 1998b.





## CHAPTER TEN

### RACE, IMPERIALISM AND RECONSTRUCTING SELVES: LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY KOREA IN EUROPEAN TRAVEL LITERATURE

Huajeong Seok

Korea was a country virtually unknown to Europeans until the very end of the nineteenth century. For hundreds of years a mystical “veiled” region, Korea only appeared as a reference in obscure books and shipwrecked seamen’s accounts. The kingdom itself had a long-standing and strict policy of rejecting any contact with Westerners and maintained an anti-Christian position. However, by the nineteenth century, French missionaries began to make their way into the forbidden land to introduce Christianity and Western ideas, like a thread entering the needle’s eye, and thus became the principal sources of information about the country.

Korea began to welcome Westerners after it was forced to conclude a treaty with Japan in 1876 as a means of resisting Chinese and Japanese domination. Western diplomats, businessmen, adventurers, doctors, geographers, and explorers all contributed to a rich body of new literature about Korea. As with many other “benighted” and “heathen” countries, Korea was widely perceived as poor, ignorant, backward and unprogressive by Europeans who mirrored the views and attitudes of the missionaries and others who came before them. As European supremacy in industry and commerce reached its pinnacle, Westerners took on a “civilizing” mission, secular as well as religious. Paternalistic ideas like “Manifest Destiny” and “White Man’s Burden” contributed to the growth of imperialism. Eurocentrism, which may be defined as both ethnocentric and racist, resulted in unprecedented imperial expansion during this period. Colonial attitudes were hardly new, but became more pronounced than ever before.

Travel literature emerged as one of the most popular literary genres among European readers during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Detailed accounts of journeys to unfamiliar locales fed the readers’ desire for knowledge concerning the foreign and the exotic. Perceived differences in behavior, customs and beliefs held a deep fascination for nineteenth-century Europeans, and for many, the travel narrative provided

the only vehicle for its manifestation. This fascination was enhanced by the exaggerated recollections of explorers who depicted Koreans as strange or exotic. The influence of European travel literature on readers and public opinion in general did not have an immediate impact. However, over time, these travel narratives provided a significant source of increased European awareness of Korea.

This chapter, primarily focusing on European discourses on Korea during the second half of the nineteenth century, is a case study in exploring how Europeans have typically understood and viewed Korea and its people. It traces how race and imperialism influenced European constructions of Korea in relation to the power politics the country had to face. This is not a discussion of Korea and Korean-ness. Rather, it is an exploration of the influence that travelers' accounts had in forming European views of Korea. Written from a Korean perspective, this study offers an alternative lens through which European attitudes can be examined and sheds light on just how unaware Europeans were of their own biases.

### *Racial Clichés*

Until the end of nineteenth century, European images of Korea were largely based on ignorance and an accumulated negative historical record. European travel literature relied on unsubstantiated documents in the construction of its narratives. When Europeans arrived in Korea—diplomats, traders, and missionaries—they were not impressed with what they saw. Korea was nearing the end of a dynasty; it was decaying from internal causes, and poverty and evident misgovernment made the country unattractive. Missionary appeals to the Catholic Church for support tended to reinforce the impression of Korea as a desperately poor, backward country in need of Christian charity.

The earliest European account of Korea was written by the Dutch seaman Hendrick Hamel, who landed on Jeju Island with surviving crew members after a series of storms. Published in 1668, Hamel's record of his fifteen years in custody as a prisoner and slave were, in fact, used as supporting evidence in his application for back pay from the Dutch East India Company to cover his period of incarceration. Hamel's negative and contradictory accounts of the people he encountered became the first and often the only primary source material used by many European authors writing about Korea. For centuries, much of the travel literature on Korea reproduced fantastical versions of Hamel's accounts.

Another influential narrative, which all visitors to the country would have probably read was a book written in 1874 by the Frenchman Père Dallet. Charles Dallet wrote the definitive *Histoire de l'Église de Corée* which runs to one thousand pages detailing the work of French Catholic missionaries who accumulated the greatest volume of information about the country. Dallet compiled the general introduction on the basis of letters and other communications received in Paris from the missionaries in Korea. Largely due to the French missionary reports, early European views of Korea were skewed towards negativity. Dallet introduced Korea in minute and absorbing detail—dirty towns, people who ate voraciously and people who wore weird white clothes and strange black hats. He cited filthiness, demoralization, semi-barbarism, atheism and indifference to an afterlife as well as other negative qualities.<sup>1</sup> Dallet's narrative was recognized as a valuable resource, although at least one critic recognized that within the text “were frequently obsolete descriptions of habits and customs.”<sup>2</sup>

The astonishing fact is that Dallet could neither read nor speak Korean and had never visited the Kingdom. Nevertheless, his narrative, full of fact and fancy, was reproduced and enlarged upon in later travel literature and generated many clichéd notions about Korea. In most published accounts of Korea, the translation of the country's name became a point of departure for writers. In 1885, an American, Percival Lowell, wrote *Chosön the Land of the Morning Calm: A Sketch of Korea*, first introducing the term *Morning Calm*, based on a loosely Romanized translation of the written characters for Chōsen (or Choson), also known as Korea (sometimes spelled Corea). The idyllic term suggested romance and mystery. Although originating from a Westerner's imaginative translation, the term “Land of the Morning Calm” still holds an appeal for contemporary Koreans who believe it reflects part of their identity. The phrase is still used for commercial and touristic purposes.

However, the early Western writers often used the term in a double-edged way. Take, for example, the British traveler Arnold Henry Savage Landor, in his 1895 book, *Korea or Cho-sen: the Land of the Morning Calm*. According to Landor, “The meaning of the word is very poetic, viz., ‘The Land of the Morning Calm,’ and is one well adapted to the present Coreans, since, indeed, they seem to have entirely lost the vigor and

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<sup>1</sup> Dallet, 1978 [1874]: 218, 229–30, 234–235.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop, 1898: 11.

strength of their predecessors.”<sup>3</sup> Later, he remarks, “Such is life in Cho-sen, where... there is calm, too much of it, not only in the morning... but all through both day and night.”<sup>4</sup> German geographer Siegfried Genthe, who had read the travel journals on Korea before his visit in 1901, reiterated similar descriptions of Korea as an attractive, mystical and unknown country, but insisted that the term *Morning Calm* should be more correctly translated as *Fresh Morning*.<sup>5</sup> Ernst J. Oppert, a North German believed to be more of a bandit in the guise of a trader, published *A Forbidden Land* in 1880, in which he described his piratical expedition. After the publication of *Korea: The Hermit Nation* by the American Congregational minister and orientalist William Elliot Griffis (1843–1928) in 1882, the terms “forbidden” and “hermit kingdom” gained wide currency in Western discussions of Korea and are still used to describe pre-modern Chōsen or present-day North Korea, which was separated from South Korea after the Korean War (1950–53).

The writings of European visitors usually began with Korea's attractions, with introductory chapters describing the fine and healthy climate, the fertile soil and the beautiful natural scenery with its picturesque background of high mountains and little islands rising like green patches here and there in the bay.<sup>6</sup> These initial descriptions of the natural environment, however, only provided a *mise en scène* for the sharply contrasting descriptions that would follow describing filthy streets, decaying towns, fetid odors, overcrowding and cultural stagnation.<sup>7</sup> As evidenced in the writers' descriptions, nineteenth-century Europeans were keenly interested in distinguishing between the various types of people in the world according to physical and racial characteristics. European literature on Korea in the nineteenth century tended to be ethnographic, as opposed to the earlier cosmographic emphasis of explorers mapping the unknown world from 1500 onwards. As declared in her book's preface and dedication, Bishop's objective was to enlighten the world with regard to the leading characteristics of the Mongolian races and to enhance the readers' knowledge of the geography and people of Korea. Oppert claimed that he was dedicated to the further progress of geographical and ethnological science. Thus, European sojourners established a hegemony in the

<sup>3</sup> Landor, 1895: 61.

<sup>4</sup> Landor, 1895: 275.

<sup>5</sup> Genthe, 2007 [1905]: 10, 57, 60, 62, 64, 72–73, 76, 90, 138, 151, 175, 189, 228, 236.

<sup>6</sup> Curzon, 1896: 85–86; Bishop, 1898: 16; Landor, 1895: 6; Genthe, 2007 [1905]: 64, 81.

<sup>7</sup> Bishop, 1898: 28; Vautier and Frandin, 2002 [1902]: 29–31, 72.

modern "scientific" discourse on Korea and were responsible for the first anthropological accounts of the Korean "race." The powerful influence of such writing still remains. Many contemporary stereotypes of Koreans are rooted in these Eurocentric constructions.

There was (and still is) a pervasive racial discourse concerning Korean stereotypes. European writers were preoccupied with discovering ethnic differences. They agreed that, generally speaking, the Koreans bore a certain resemblance to other people of Mongolian origin and belonged to this family. However, they formed a distinct branch of the family. Rather than focusing on cultural (and thus learned) attributes, they set out to show the physical and biological aspects of race by measuring people's heads and other body parts. They studied and described such superficial attributes as hair texture, skin pigmentation and amount of body hair. Physical caricatures of Koreans included negative references to "slant eyes," the yellow or brown skin tones that contrasted with the "norm" of white Europeans and stereotypical descriptions of straight dark or shiny blue hair, all confirming that the native people were considered as "Other."<sup>8</sup> Such phrenological research was widely carried out during the nineteenth century, particularly around the time Social Darwinism was gaining ascendancy and acceptance in Europe.

It is worth noting that most nineteenth century European writers were not only Eurocentric in their approach to race and physique but also believed in class distinctions, with upper-class nobles perceived to be physically different from lower-class peasants. There were writers who observed some Koreans with blue eyes and fair hair, surmising that there was a Caucasian element in the stock, especially in its upper class.<sup>9</sup> However, in *Problems of the Far East*, Curzon stated that he was not aware of any scientific confirmation for this hypothesis.<sup>10</sup> Landor obviously believed otherwise. "When you notice a crowd of Koreans you will be amazed to see among them people almost white and with features closely approaching the Aryan, these being the higher classes in the kingdom," and "They possess good teeth and these are beautifully white, which is a blessing for people like them who continually show them."<sup>11</sup> He continued; "If you take the royal family of Korea, for instance, you will find that the king and queen, and all the royal princes, especially on the queen's

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<sup>8</sup> Curzon, 1896: 95, 103; Bishop, 1898: 12–13; Landor, 1895: 45–46.

<sup>9</sup> Oppert, 1880: 9–10, 13.

<sup>10</sup> Curzon, 1896: 97.

<sup>11</sup> Landor, 1895: 45, 47.

side . . . are as white as any Caucasian, and that their eyes are hardly slanting at all, and in some cases are quite as straight as ours. Members of some of the nobler families might also be taken for Europeans. Of course, the middle classes are of the Mongolian type, somewhat more refined and strongly built than the usual specimens of either Chinese or Japanese."<sup>12</sup>

As is generally known, the upper-class women of Chōsen were not visible. They were seldom allowed go out and were kept in seclusion; hence, writers could not describe them in the same detail as the men. Although Landor never actually had the opportunity to meet and observe upper-class women, he seemed to be totally fascinated by them and was pleased when a concubine of one of the king's ministers agreed to sit for a portrait. "Both in respect of lightness of complexion and the other above-named qualities they seemed to me to approach nearest to the standard of European feminine beauty."<sup>13</sup> This backhanded compliment still reeks of racism. "Others" were judged in relation to the European ideal standard, and in some cases Westerners were willing to confer upon higher ranking "non-whites" the status of "whites."

European observations of lower class Korean women and marriage certainly confirm everyone's worst suspicions about the oppression of women in those times. British traveler Isabella Bishop, in her book *Korea and her Neighbours*, observed the following about Korean women: "Washing is her manifest destiny so long as her lord wears white. . . . The women are slaves to the laundry, and the only sound which breaks the stillness of a Seoul night is the regular beat of their laundry sticks. . . . Many of these women are domestic slaves, and all are of the lowest class."<sup>14</sup> European literature and photography have continually portrayed such stereotypes of women as servile home workers, both obedient and reverential in their diligence to duty. Some of the literature could even be described as ethnic pornography. The poorer women "have a peculiar arrangement of dress by which a short white bodice covers the shoulders, but leaves the breasts entirely exposed,"<sup>15</sup> No doubt Curzon found this alluring and he found the Korean woman more attractive than her Japanese counterpart, describing her as "the hard-visaged, strong-limbed, masterful housewife."<sup>16</sup> It would not be out of place to say that the nineteenth century Western sexist and racist

<sup>12</sup> Landor, 1895: 46; also Varat, 2006 [1890]: 55.

<sup>13</sup> Landor, 1895: 63–64.

<sup>14</sup> Bishop, 1898: 43, 45.

<sup>15</sup> Curzon, 1896: 95.

<sup>16</sup> Curzon, 1896: 95.



stereotyping of Asian women as subservient and compliant has resisted revision and persists even today.

For Bishop, the cause of women's miserable status in Korea lay in the educational system: "...superstitions regarding demons, the education of men, illiteracy, a minimum of legal rights, and inexorable custom have combined to give woman as low a status in civilized Korea as in any of the barbarous countries in the world."<sup>17</sup> Therefore, according to Bishop, "Narrowness...conceit, superciliousness, a false pride which despises manual labor, a selfish individualism, destructive of generous public spirit and social trustfulness, a slavery in act and thought to customs and traditions 2,000 years old, a narrow intellectual view, a shallow moral sense, and an estimate of women as essentially degrading, appear to be the products of the Korean educational system."<sup>18</sup> Westerners were not the only ones pondering the benefits of a better education system. Similar viewpoints about education can also be found in some Korean newspaper editorials of the time.

Due to the inherent racist biases of nineteenth-century writers, it is almost impossible to build a more nuanced picture of Korean culture at that time. People were depicted stereotypically and regarded as undeserving of either thy or help. "The Neapolitan *lazzaroni*, of world-wide reputation for extreme laziness, have indeed worthy rivals in Korean peasantry."<sup>19</sup> Bishop continues: "...a crowd of dirty Mongolian faces.... [and] the dull, dazed look of apathy which is characteristic of the Korean."<sup>20</sup> Curzon judged Koreans as following: "all except the privileged class... at a dead level of uncomplaining poverty, [leaving] them immoral, inert, listless, and apathetic."<sup>21</sup> Landor saw Koreans as living in a kind of spiritual vacuum: "In Corea, as is the case all over the Far East, the natives are not much concerned about this future existence and attach little importance to death and physical pain."<sup>22</sup> He imagined that they were less sensitive to pain than Europeans. "For hard heads and for insensibilities to pain, I cannot recommend to you better persons than the Koreans."<sup>23</sup> For Bishop, "The 6,700 inhabitants of the Korean town, or rather the male half of them, are always on the move. The narrow roads are always full of them, sauntering

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<sup>17</sup> Bishop, 1898: 342.

<sup>18</sup> Bishop, 1898: 387-388.

<sup>19</sup> Landor 1895: 8.

<sup>20</sup> Bishop, 1898: 126, 349.

<sup>21</sup> Curzon, 1896: 98, 221.

<sup>22</sup> Landor 1895: 246-247.

<sup>23</sup> Landor 1895: 82.

along in their dress hats, not apparently doing anything. . . . I know Seoul by day and night, its palaces and its slums, and its unspeakable meanness and faded splendors, its purposeless crowds, its medieval processions, which for barbaric splendor cannot be matched on earth. . . ."<sup>24</sup> The assumption that Koreans were far behind Europeans in all matters is evident in Genthe's text. Genthe confessed that he was shocked to see that Korean Buddhist monks had bathrooms.<sup>25</sup> It is apparent that he believed that a bathroom was a solely Western amenity and privilege. From Hamel onward, nineteenth century European discourses on Korea reiterated the negative stereotypes of poverty, laziness, and ignorance, unconsciously judging Koreans based on their European chauvinism, which championed "civilization," science, and Christianity.<sup>26</sup>

Koreans appear to have been constantly judged according to Western standards with little appreciation for cultural differences. Landor even lamented: "The Korean is an unfortunate being. He has no pockets. . . . [He is] not yet civilized enough to possess pockets."<sup>27</sup> In general, Europeans tended to believe that their own culture was the most developed and that they belonged to the most advanced "race." Orientalism in Western discussions included the "Othering" of Koreans. Their culture and lifestyle were perceived as "exotic," in stark contrast to "ordinary" Western customs. As suggested above, a lot of the European discourse on national character and the creation of clichéd stereotypes of Koreans began with the earlier writers, Hamel and Père Dallet. The writers who followed would often reiterate the same views. Take, for example, Bishop's comment, "It is every man's business to hear or create all the news he can. What he hears he embellishes by lies and exaggerations. Korea is the country of wild rumors. What a Korean knows, or rather hears, he tells. According to Père Dallet, "he does not know the meaning of reserve, though he is utterly devoid of frankness."<sup>28</sup> Ironically, Bishop and Dallet were both blind to the fact that they were themselves guilty of believing and perpetuating rumors and exaggerations created by other Europeans before them.

Western attempts to describe the culture of Koreans or Asians in general, were hindered by Eurocentric blinders that made it difficult or even impossible to provide a fair depiction of cultures, customs and behaviors

<sup>24</sup> Bishop, 1898: 33–34, 38.

<sup>25</sup> Genthe, 2007 [1905]: 165–166.

<sup>26</sup> Hamel, 2005 [1813]: 58; Landor, 1895: 163; Vautier and Frandín, 2002 [1902]: 113.

<sup>27</sup> Landor, 1895: 55, 174.

<sup>28</sup> Bishop, 1898: 355.

that the writers could not comprehend. As their writing makes apparent, this lack of comprehension did not prevent Europeans from voicing their opinions. Comparing the culture of the “other” with European culture was self-serving and confirmed Europeans’ notions of their own superiority. Curzon endeavored to describe his view of the Asian personality in *The Problems of the Far East*. While not entirely negative, there is an undercurrent of sly innuendo in which Curzon invites the reader to be amused by his clever depiction of the Asian character:

The dominant note of Asian individuality is contrast, in character a general indifference to truth and respect for successful wiles, in deportment dignity, in society the rigid maintenance of the family union, in government the mute acquiescence of the governed, in administration and justice the open corruption of administration and judges, and in every-day life a statuesque and inexhaustible patience, which attaches no value to time, and wages unappeasable warfare against hurry.<sup>29</sup>

Bishop offers her criticism much more directly. “Civil corruption,” she writes, “permeating every stratum of society, the factious political disturbances which have disgraced Korea for many years have not been conflicts of principle at all, but fights for the Government position which gives its holder the disposal of offices and money.”<sup>30</sup> As for religion, some writers agreed with the Dutch navigator Hamel who commented that, “the Koreans have scarcely any.”<sup>31</sup> Again, Curzon commented: “how deeply ingrained in the people is this semi-aesthetic, semi-superstitious nature-worship [which] may be illustrated by the case of Paik-tu-San (White Peak Mountain)... That the monasteries have for long been visited far more for pleasure’s sake than for duty, is also evident from the remark of Hamel 240 years earlier.”<sup>32</sup> “Spirit worship, a species of shamanism, prevails all over the kingdom, and holds the uneducated masses and the women of all classes in complete bondage.”<sup>33</sup> Landor also commented; “The Koreans are extremely superstitious, and they are much afraid of the dead, metempsychosis is not an uncommon trait of their minds, especially among the better classes.”<sup>34</sup> Even the German, Oppert, commented in the same vein: “In utter disregard for their own religious ceremonies

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<sup>29</sup> Curzon, 1896: 4.

<sup>30</sup> Bishop, 1898: 447.

<sup>31</sup> Curzon, 1896: 109; Tyagai, 1994 [1958]: 120; Chaille-Long, 2006 [1894]: 282.

<sup>32</sup> Curzon, 1896: 104–105; also Hamel, 2005 [1813]: 56–57.

<sup>33</sup> Bishop, 1898: 21; also Hamel, 2005 [1813]: 56–57.

<sup>34</sup> Bishop, 1898: 120.

and customs the Koreans hardly rise above the level of savages.”<sup>35</sup> Such judgment hinged on the Christian bias against unfamiliar religious practices.

All visitors without exception observed and commented on the fact that Koreans traditionally dressed in white cotton.<sup>36</sup> Curzon commented: “I doubt whether to most persons at home Korea is known except as a land of white clothes and black hats.”<sup>37</sup> However, none of the writers was able to say what meaning the wearing of white clothes had for Koreans. Curzon’s description on the custom is full of imagination:

It is not a fashion imposed by conquest, like the pigtail in China; nor by smartness, like the Albanian petticoat; nor by dignity, like the Roman Toga; nor by serviceableness, like the highland kilt; not even by the vulgar criterion of comfort, like the European trouser. The color cannot have been designed to resist the sun, because in winter there is not too much sun to resist. . . . I harbor a secret suspicion the white cotton garments of the men are now maintained by them for the excellent purpose they serve in keeping women busy.<sup>38</sup>

A French missionary in 1870s, Gustav Charles Mutel, who was appointed as Vicar Apostolic of Korea in 1890, held fast to the view that Korean people who wore white clothes and women wearing long coats were somehow associated with the ancient Hebrews who had the same color of clothing and appearance.<sup>39</sup> Unlike Père Dallet, Archbishop Mutel became proficient in Korean languages in the course of his missionary duty left a voluminous record in his diaries, which contains valuable information and reveals some understanding of the country. Mutel’s point of view seemed to agree with a theory held by some anthropologists and orientalist at the time whereby that Koreans originated from Jews and adopted the same style of clothing. This racial theory of Korean origins reveals how Europeans entertained a mixture of fact and fiction combined with widespread anti-Semitism of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>35</sup> Oppert, 1880: 112.

<sup>36</sup> Oppert, 1880: 128; Curzon, 1896: 94; Bishop, 1898: 26–27; Ducrocq, 2001 [1904]: 77–79.

<sup>37</sup> Curzon, 1896: x.

<sup>38</sup> Curzon, 1896: 130–131.

<sup>39</sup> Boulesteix, 2001 [1999]: 199–200.

*Japanese Prism, Imperial Echoes*

At the end of the nineteenth century Korea became the target of European and Japanese expansionism. European discourses on Korea developed within the imperialist context and framework from mid-century onwards and tended to link the concept of progress and development to racial preoccupations. If any people or "race" could not defend its land, they deserved to lose it. This was a powerful rationalization for both imperialism and territorial expansion by global powers. The complex interplay between the discourses influenced both the construction of Japanese imperialism and its sphere of influence in Korea. The common vein in European discussions of Korea justified Japanese actions by representing the Korean people as primitive, uncultured, unable to function internationally, and needing Japanese protection and direction. This attitude led to a tacit approval of Japanese incursions into Korea. Thus, most European visitors and opinion makers up to the early twentieth century regarded the Korean case as nearly hopeless and created an image of Korea as barbarous, helpless and unable to stand on its own. Information based on observations of and records produced by the efficient colonial the government of imperialist Japan became part of what was known of Korea. The country became the object of colonial studies such as anthropology and ethnology. Its history, as perceived by contemporary Europeans unfolded not autonomously but heteronomously. Thus, European and Japanese viewpoints established the basis for European Korean studies.

Most European writers had visited Japan before they visited Korea and had also read materials informed by a Japanese perspective on Korea. Bishop observed Korean culture through a Japanese prism; "Korean cities without priests or temples; houses without "god shelves"; village festivals without a *mikoshi* or idols carried in festive procession; marriage and burial without priestly blessing; an absence of religious ceremonials and sacred books to which real or assumed reverence is paid, and nothing to show that religion has any hold on the popular mind, constitute a singular Korean characteristic."<sup>40</sup> Such views were not necessarily informed by personal experience but rather by Japanese observations and attitudes.

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<sup>40</sup> Bishop, 1898: 399.

It should be noted that discussions on Korea included the Powers of the high age of imperialism and worldwide Anglo-Russian rivalry. Some Russian intelligence officers, such as Karneev, Mikhailov, Dadeshkalian, Altan, Vebel, patrolled and travelled through the Korean Peninsula during the 1880s and 1890s and had read Western travel literature before visiting. They, too, entertained their own fantasies of an exotic country. Adding to the misinformation, for example, Dadeshkalian left a strange account about monkeys and crocodiles—animals that have never inhabited the Peninsula.<sup>41</sup> Russian reports were mostly full of fervent anti-British and anti-Japanese sentiment.<sup>42</sup> Colonel Altan, for example, reported that the Japanese (and their British partners) were only pursuing commercial and military interests in Korea, because the country was considered a gateway to India and, through India, an opening to Turkey, Afghanistan, and Russia.<sup>43</sup> Apart from the animosity towards England and Japan, most Russian opinions on Korea and Korean-ness were relatively favorable and even positive. In Russian eyes, Korean farmers and laborers were models of diligence and passion and were largely literate.<sup>44</sup> Russians appeared to sympathize with the Korean people who were menaced by the Powers asserting priority in the Peninsula. They recognized that the Koreans were striving for a policy of seclusion and diplomatic support for protection, whether from Russia, Britain, America or otherwise. However, as Dadeshkalian suggested, this was very much like “a drowning man trying to grab at a straw.”<sup>45</sup>

During the 1890s, background information for British writers was largely provided by members of foreign diplomatic services in East Asia, particularly by Walter C. Hillier, the British Consul General in Korea. As is the case with diplomats' reports, most tended to convey pride in the imperial powers' civilizing mission. This is blatantly obvious in Curzon's dedication at the beginning of *Problems of the Far East*: “To those who believe that the British Empire is, under Providence, the greatest instrument for good that the world has seen and who hold, with the writer, that its work in the Far East is not accomplished this book is inscribed.” Most British narratives defended the British Empire's commercial thrust and its diplomatic interest in allying with Japan against what was considered the Russian

<sup>41</sup> Tyagai, 1994 [1958]: 117–118; also Hamel, 2005 [1813]: 54.

<sup>42</sup> Tyagai, 1994 [1958]: 159–162, 174, 187, 201–210.

<sup>43</sup> Tyagai, 1994 [1958]: 159, 187.

<sup>44</sup> Tyagai, 1994 [1958]: 141, 176, 182, 190.

<sup>45</sup> Tyagai, 1994 [1958]: 151, 157, 203, 206–207.

menace in East Asia. Bishop revealed such thinking, citing an article from a Russian newspaper in her book *Korea and Her Neighbors*: "*Novae Vremya* goes on to urge the Russian Government to exercise, before it is too late, a more searching surveillance than at present, to take steps to reduce the number of British officials in the Korean Government (the customs), and to compel Japan to withdraw what are practically the military garrisons which she has established in Korea."<sup>46</sup> Bishop ventured to express the opinion that "Korea, however, is incapable of standing alone, and unless so difficult a matter as a joint protectorate could be arranged, she must be under the tutelage of either Japan or Russia. If Russia were to acquire an actual supremacy, the usual result would follow. Preferential duties and other imposts would practically make an end of British trade in Korea with all its large potentialities."<sup>47</sup>

It is apparent that British observers in particular, who were keenly conscious of power politics in Asia, believed that Japan was the appropriate country to take Korea under its wing. Bishop believed that "Japan was thoroughly honest in her efforts. She had no intention to subjugate, but rather to play the role of the protector of Korea and the guarantor of her independence."<sup>48</sup> At the time, Curzon, who was acquainted with Asian politics as Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, also thought that Japan had a promising future as a dominant power in East Asia, particularly after winning a war with China in 1894–95. In the second edition of his book, which was published after the war, he commented: "Like the English, [the Japanese] are stubborn fighters and born sailors. If she can but intimidate any would-be enemy from attempting a landing upon her shores, and can fly an unchallenged flag over the surrounding waters . . . she will fulfill her *rôle* in the international politics of the future."<sup>49</sup>

Some writers were inclined to rely on Japanese references for interpreting Korean history. Although some of them were sympathetic to the cause of Korean independence, the country's historical relationship with Japan made many foreign observers see Korea through Japanese eyes. The historical compilation written by Griffis, who had no first-hand experience in Korea, and who largely copied from Dallet and Japanese sources, led to a general acceptance and approval of Japan's incursions into Korea. Griffis' work was used to justify Japanese actions by showing that the Korean

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<sup>46</sup> Bishop, 1898: 458.

<sup>47</sup> Bishop, 1898: 457.

<sup>48</sup> Bishop, 1898: 452.

<sup>49</sup> Curzon, 1896: 393.



people were unable to function internationally and in were in need of Japanese direction. Curzon even misrepresented the historical relationship between Korea and Japan, stating that “down to the end of the fourteenth century, the relations between the two countries . . . were, as a rule, those of Japanese ascendancy and Korean allegiance.”<sup>50</sup> Bishop also made the mistake of wrongly interpreting the historical incidents of Japanese brutality in Korean history. She claimed that “In order to judge correctly of the action or inaction of Japan during 1896 and 1897 it must be borne in mind not only that Japanese diplomacy is secret and reticent, but that it is steady; that it has not hitherto been affected by any great political cataclysm at home; that it has less of opportunism than that of almost any other nation, and that the Japanese have as much tenacity and fixity of purpose as any other race. Also, Japanese policy in Korea is still shaped by the same remarkable statesmen.”<sup>51</sup> Although other chapters in Bishop’s book deal minutely with the political upheavals in Korea, she carefully avoided mentioning or passing judgment on two of the most tragic incidents in Korean history—Queen Min’s assassination by the Japanese minister in Seoul in 1895 and the King’s subsequent asylum at the Russian Legation in Seoul.

Most writers bluntly and negatively predicted the future that lay before the Korean people. Bishop, for instance, asserted: “The Koreans had no appetite for reform. . . . From the palace to the hovel, the new program [for political reform initiated by Japan] was met with an obdurate conspiracy of resistance that only a slow-witted and lethargic people could put forth. . . . The reform of Korea is like the task of Sisypheus.”<sup>52</sup> He continues: “As Korea is incapable of reforming herself from within, then she must be reformed from without.”<sup>53</sup> Curzon concluded pessimistically: “A country that is too weak to stand alone gains nothing by an affected indifference to external support. If Korea is not to collapse irretrievably she must lean upon a stronger Power. . . . [T]he petty little kingdom is far too corrupt to profit by, and too decrepit to retain. I know of no more interesting page in modern history than the attempt to dragoon Korea into a civilization that is abhorrent both to her taste and to her traditions.”<sup>54</sup> European writers

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<sup>50</sup> See Seroshevskii, 2006 [1909]: 284.

<sup>51</sup> Bishop, 1898: 454–455.

<sup>52</sup> Curzon, 1896: 379, 382.

<sup>53</sup> Bishop, 1898: 452.

<sup>54</sup> Curzon, 1896: 372–373.

were not only Eurocentric, but also viewed Korea through the distorted lens of Japanese imperialism.

*Encounters and Reconstructed Selves*

Just as Europeans often had contradictory opinions about the Korean people and their civilization, the response of Koreans after their encounters with Western people and their civilization was also dichotomous. *The Independent*, a two page tri-weekly newspaper in English and Korean script, glorified the benefits of competition and struggle since the Social Darwinists saw this as operating both internally and externally in a society. The newspaper's editorials suggested that Korea had been aroused from an age-long sleep and that it was about to enter into the turbulent competition of modern progress with the same energy with which she had for so many centuries pursued and idealized the immobile. *The Independent* especially reiterated the importance of education, and particularly female education, as the country's most pressing need,<sup>55</sup> and suggested that the absence of education had brought Korea to its lamentable condition. According to *The Independent*, education would "save us."<sup>56</sup> Editorials further suggested that "to elevate the women and their right, the best modus operandi is educating them. . . . Western education combined with Christian training would be needed."<sup>57</sup>

Bishop cites a contrary Korean response. The 1896 book *Confucianist Scholars' Handbook of Latitudes and Longitudes*, was edited by Sin Ki Sun, the Minister of Education and published at the Government's expense. It suggests that "Europe is too far away from the center of civilization, i.e., the Middle Kingdom (China) . . . Russians, Turks, English, French, Germans, and Belgians look more like birds and beasts than men, and their languages sound like the chirping of fowls. According to the views of recent generations, what westerners call the Christian Religion is vulgar, shallow, and erroneous, and is an instance of the vileness of Barbarian customs, which are not worthy of serious discussion."<sup>58</sup> Referring to Sin Ki

<sup>55</sup> *The Independent* (Seoul), 3 December, 22 December 1896; 6 January, 9 January 1899; 11 March, 20 March 1899; 3 April 1899.

<sup>56</sup> *The Independent* (Seoul), 5 July 1898.

<sup>57</sup> *The Independent* (Seoul), 7 September 1896; 11 May 1897; 10 September 1898; 7 September 1899.

<sup>58</sup> Bishop, 1898: 438.

Sun, *The Independent* commented: "He has mentioned that the adoption of foreign clothes by the soldiers [and] policemen, and the cutting [of their] hair is the first step toward making them barbarians. . . . Sin Ki Sun lacks knowledge of [the] actual state of things today will be abolished from the Cabinet."<sup>59</sup> It is apparent that at the time Korean society had mixed feelings concerning its relationship with the West. Some believed that progress would come through an adoption of Western values while others resisted the West's imposition of values that were foreign to Korean culture and tradition. While some Europeans travelers and the occasional foreign resident living as a high-ranking official in Korea, such as the German Paul Georg von Von Möllendorff, felt entitled to observe and comment upon Korean culture, they did not like being the objects of curiosity themselves.<sup>60</sup> Examples of European discomfort are found in travel accounts from Hamel to Bishop. Bishop recalls her unpleasant experience of being subjected to what she considered was constant aggressive and intolerable curiosity throughout her travels in Korea, especially from women and children.<sup>61</sup>

Travel literature is sometimes viewed as a body of knowledge constructed around the encounters of the "European Self" during the course of European overseas expansion. At the end of the nineteenth century, the travelers' journals were imbued with the writers' inner experiences—autobiographical confession, observation and opinion—and were therefore ambiguously located between reality and fabrication. The exploration of "the unknown world" and "the other" was to the writers an exploration of their own inner thoughts and beliefs. Geographer Genthe liked to call himself a "Western Barbarian" or a "Western Savage," but even so, he vowed never to lose sight of the importance of maintaining a position of European supremacy over "the other."<sup>62</sup> Curzon recognized, at least theoretically, "a common pitfall of writers upon the East—viz. the tendency to depreciate that which we do not ourselves sympathize with or understand, and which are therefore prone to mistake for a mark of inferiority or degradation."<sup>63</sup> However, he often failed to remember this when commenting on Korean life.

It seems that Bishop eventually saw more hope for Koreans, based on her personal and sympathetic observation of Koreans living in Manchuria

<sup>59</sup> *The Independent* (Seoul), 6 June, 11 June 1896.

<sup>60</sup> Moellendorff, 1999 [1930]: 67, 90–92; Bishop, 1898: 126–127; Tyagai, 1994 [1958]: 120, 124; Genthe, 2007 [1905]: 107, 145–146.

<sup>61</sup> Bishop, 1898: 126–127; also Moellendorff, 1999 [1930]: 90.

<sup>62</sup> Genthe, 2007 [1905]: 97, 103, 166, 296–297, 302.

<sup>63</sup> Curzon, 1896: 5.

and Siberia. "In Korea I had learned to think of Koreans as the dregs of a race, and to regard their conditions as hopeless, but in Primorsk, I saw reason for considerably modifying my opinion. They were mostly starving folk who fled prior to 1884 from famine, and their prosperity and general demeanor give me the hope that their countrymen in Korea, if they ever have an honest administration and protection for their earnings, may slowly develop into *men*."<sup>64</sup> She continues, saying "You have seen the Koreans at home, with their limpness, laziness, dependence, and poverty, and Koreans under Russian rule rise into a thrifty and prosperous population. The patient reader can to some extent judge for himself of the prospects of a country which is incapable of standing alone."<sup>65</sup> However, Bishop concluded, "Korea is not *necessarily* a poor country. Her resources are underdeveloped, not exhausted . . . and she has no beggar class. . . . [The people] appear lazy. I thought them so [at the time], but they live under a *régime* under which they have no security for the gains of labor."<sup>66</sup> Finally, Bishop says: "I must say that I saw nothing to ridicule, unless national customs and etiquette varying from our own are necessarily ridiculous. On the contrary, they had a simplicity, dignity, kindness, courtesy, and propriety which have left a very agreeable impression on me."<sup>67</sup> As Landor declared, the people might become more productive "if the magistrates were not so much given to 'squeezing' the people. To make money and to have it extorted the moment you have made it, is not encouraging to the poor Korean who has worked for it; therefore, little exertion is displayed beyond what is necessary to earn, not the 'daily bread,' for that they do not eat, but the daily bowl of rice."<sup>68</sup> Commenting on the "squeezing" structures of Korean society, *The Independent* also lamented that the whole trouble with Korea came from the corruptible actions of Government officials. "There are two classes in Korea—the squeezers and the squeezees; the former implies the official class and the latter the country's producers."<sup>69</sup>

Landor appears to be more charitable than other writers: "Looking at both sides of the medal, the man of Cho-sen may have a great many bad qualities from our point of view, yet he also undoubtedly possesses some virtues on which we, who are supposed to be more civilized and

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<sup>64</sup> Bishop, 1898: 236.

<sup>65</sup> Bishop, 1898: 445.

<sup>66</sup> Bishop, 1898: 445, 78, 80.

<sup>67</sup> Bishop, 1898: 260.

<sup>68</sup> Bishop, 1898: 8.

<sup>69</sup> *The Independent* (Seoul), 25 July 1896; 10 December 1896; 11 May 1897.

more charitable, cannot pride ourselves. Believe me, when things are taken all round, there is after all but little difference between the Heathen and the Christian; nay, the solid charity and generosity of the first is often superior to the advanced philanthropy of the other.”<sup>70</sup> Genthe, unlike other writers on Korea, maintained a consistent viewpoint according to which Koreans were right to have pride in their traditional culture and he enumerated Korea’s merits. Genthe countered the negative opinions on Korea that could be found in the representative records of Hamel, Dallet, Bishop and Curzon.<sup>71</sup> However, apart from some rare positive comments, most European writers painted negative pictures of the country, due to their ignorance of and racist bias against Korea and Korean-ness. Korea as “Other” was stereotyped as irrational, pre-modern, and barbaric. Europeans in general were mostly ignorant about Korea, but what they did know came from their reading of history, from the Western writers’ perspective, and from the reportage of current events. Even today, many Europeans continue to form judgments about Korea based on the legacy of nineteenth century imperialist thinking. Given the general ignorance of and indifference towards Korea, Europeans are not interested in the factual or careful analysis of Korean affairs.

Recently, BBC Worldwide’s 2010 annual news poll revealed that Europeans, continue to maintain negative attitudes about Korea to a greater extent than the people of any other continent.<sup>72</sup> It is as if the Europeans are still viewing the country on the basis of nineteenth century world-views. Regrettably, current events (one example being the present nuclear crisis in North Korea) have tended to reinforce negative images created in earlier historical periods. The cultural barriers that divided European travelers and native people were sharp. However, in spite of the overwhelmingly racist and Eurocentric opinions, there were also writers who made greater efforts to see Korea and its people with more sensitivity and who tried to apply at least a semblance of objectivity. Landor’s observation, made more than a century ago, may serve as a fine reminder of such a viewpoint and as an optimistic coda to this chapter:

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<sup>70</sup> Landor, 1895: 281–282.

<sup>71</sup> Genthe, 2007 [1905]: 89–90, 95, 107–108, 121, 166, 178, 206–207.

<sup>72</sup> BBC News Worldwide Poll, 18 April 2010. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news>).

It must not be forgotten that different people have different customs and different ways of thinking; therefore, what we put down as dreadful is often thought a great deal of in *The Land of the Morning Calm* . . . To the foreign observer, many of his ways and customs are at first sight incomprehensible, and even reprehensible; yet, when by chance his mode of arguing out matters for himself is clearly understood, we will almost invariably find that he is correct.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Landor, 1895: 95, 299.





## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### RACE, CULTURE AND THE REACTION TO THE JAPANESE VICTORY OF 1905 IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD

Philip Towle

When Japan opened its doors to foreign ideas, technology and trade in the second half of the nineteenth Century, it became much better known in Britain and the United States. How far it was admired and how far it was patronized is still a matter of historical debate.<sup>1</sup> What is certain is that it was lavished with praise by the British media at the time that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was signed in 1902 and, even more so, when the Japanese armed forces defeated the Russians in 1904–1905.<sup>2</sup> According to one commentator, Japan deserved the world's gratitude for the benefits its victory would confer on Asia, while another claimed that the political and economic conditions in Japan would prevent it from taking selfish advantage of its success.<sup>3</sup> Amidst the rejoicing the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was renewed and expanded to cover India. But this mood soon evaporated and Western criticisms grew, particularly over the behavior of Japanese traders, soldiers and officials in Korea, Manchuria and elsewhere in China.<sup>4</sup> Japan was the first non-European power which could challenge the Europeans and so their reactions were a test of their tolerance and willingness to accept a major power with a very different history and culture.

The question is the extent to which the sudden and dramatic change of opinion was caused or exacerbated by either racial or cultural prejudice, or by the perennial suspicions which states harbor of the growth in the power of rivals. To assess this, the first part of the chapter examines articles about Asia and Africa contributed to the heavyweight British periodicals over the century before the Russo-Japanese War. These reflected and shaped the views of the British political elite. The nineteenth Century was the golden age of the reviews—when most important politicians

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<sup>1</sup> Henning, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> "The changing East," 1902: 219; *Punch*, 4 October 1905.

<sup>3</sup> "The consequences of a Japanese victory," 1905: 132; "Great Britain, Russia and Japan," 1905: 609.

<sup>4</sup> Gascoyne-Cecil, 1910: 235.

and writers contributed to their pages, including Gladstone, Disraeli, the two Mills, John Morley, Walter Bagehot and Thomas Macaulay.<sup>5</sup> What becomes clear is that the ideas set out in public by this elite about race and culture were often not so very different from those prevalent today, but were nonetheless a sharp contrast to the behavior of many of the less educated and others working in India and elsewhere in the empire. The second part of the chapter then examines the writers, diplomats and clergymen who commented on Japan around the time of the Russo-Japanese War to see how perceptively they responded to the Japanese and how far their vision was clouded by racial or cultural prejudice.

### *Occidental Attitudes towards the Outside World*

The common view today is that our predecessors a hundred years ago were both culturist and racist, despising other peoples for some of their behavior and for their inherent characteristics, and that Western xenophobia was reflected in the attempts to exclude Oriental immigrants from Australia and the United States. Thus, many would feel that such prejudices are the most likely explanation for the change towards Japan after 1905. To assess this, we first have to decide whether our ancestors were culturist or racist and, if culturist, were more so than we are today. The distinctions are crucial: racial appearance evolves over biological time, cultural attributes alter over historical time; cultural behavior can, at least in theory, be discussed calmly and rationally, ill-defined racial feelings are much harder to deal with. If Lyautey, then a young officer, but later a well-respected French colonial governor, found it difficult to look at the Vietnamese people because their appearance was "horrible and repugnant, both male and female," there was nothing that the maligned people could do about it.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, culture and ideology can sometimes change over the course of a single lifetime. In terms of policy, racists and culturists are potentially polar opposites: the culturists want, as they see it, to "help" another people by encouraging or forcing them to take up their own culture and technology, while the racist despises them and might, at worst, want to enslave them or to destroy them.

The initial problems for a historian in deciphering attitudes are three-fold: first of all, there was a chasm separating what the intellectual elite

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<sup>5</sup> Shattock, 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Lyautey, 1932: 73.

wrote about race and imperialism, and the way British people, and particularly less educated Britons, frequently behaved towards Indians, Aborigines, Maoris and other non-Europeans. This could be because educated people hid their "real" opinions, but, if that were so, it would mean that there was a convention that other peoples should not be disparaged or mistreated, a recognition that racist taunts and behavior were unacceptable then just as they are unacceptable today. This leads on to the second problem, which is that motives are always confused, only half conscious, mixed and changeable. The third problem is that our forebears conflated the terms 'nation' and 'race,' and 'culture' and 'race.' The words were either used interchangeably, or nations were taken as a modern, political phenomenon and races as older historical groupings like tribes without necessarily any common physical characteristics.<sup>7</sup> For example, British officers differentiated in India between those they called the "martial races" and those they considered unfit to recruit into their army. But they also claimed it was British rule which had changed the inhabitants of Madras so that "the ancient military spirit had died in them, as it had died in the ordinary Hindustani of Bengal"; that is to say, their attitudes were not inherent, nor even very ancient, but cultural.<sup>8</sup> This chapter argues that, with the obvious exceptions, such as Thomas Carlyle, the conventional wisdom voiced by leading commentators to elite journals was culturist. The object of the British Empire in India and elsewhere was claimed to be the transfer of British culture and technology to other peoples.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the views amongst less educated people who came into contact with other nations were often racist and their behavior brutal, and, while brutality may not always reflect racism, it is certainly facilitated by the depersonalization which racist views produce.

The century and a half from the mid eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth was one of the great ages of terrestrial discovery for the Europeans. Opinions about the countries newly "discovered" by Western people swung between enthusiasm and shock at their behavior. The swing against Japan after 1905 was peculiar only in its suddenness and extent. During the nineteenth century, accounts of overseas travel, such as Charles Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*,<sup>10</sup> were numerous and popular, while the serious journals devoted pages to the reports of strange animals

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<sup>7</sup> Lyall, 1915: 399–426.

<sup>8</sup> Roberts, 1897, II: 383.

<sup>9</sup> Bennett, 1953.

<sup>10</sup> Darwin, 1997.

and the customs of the peoples whom the Europeans were encountering for the first time. Often, but by no means always, commentators were impressed by the travelers' reports on the customs they encountered and enchanted by the artifacts they brought back.<sup>11</sup>

Initial reports from China were so glowing that some writers professed to be sorry that they were not born as Chinese, and European country houses were embellished by Oriental porcelain and wallpapers. A commentator wrote in 1904:

As a set-off to their faults, they possess many good qualities, qualities to which Europeans aspire. But to which they frequently do not attain. The spirit of self-discipline is strongly inculcated in all classes; and they uphold a high standard of filial piety, which imposes on children the almost imperative duty to support their indigent parents... Stoical contentment has become an ingrained characteristic of the race... and they are not tormented by those feelings of ambition, vanity and vexation of spirit, so fertile a cause of unhappiness and trouble to the people of Western races.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, reports of foot-binding, infanticide, cannibalism during famines, arrogance towards foreigners and pervasive drug addiction filtered back to Europe, leading some to make much more critical judgments.<sup>13</sup> Some reviewers of such accounts warned against exaggerated prejudices—particularly those based on encounters with the Chinese living in the few ports initially open to European traders.<sup>14</sup> What puzzled the Western elite more generally was that a country which had led “every European nation by several centuries in some of the noblest triumphs in art and science” should have failed to make use of them and ceased to progress. They seemed to commentators to resemble “the [ancient] Egyptians who began by instructing the Greeks and ended by becoming incapable of being their disciples.”<sup>15</sup>

Western elite education was largely based on the classics of Greece and Rome, and school children were as familiar with Plato and Aristotle, Cicero and Livy as with the work of the great historian of Rome's decline, Edward Gibbon. In the eighteenth century, an aristocrat's education would

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<sup>11</sup> “Fraser-Tour through the Snowy Range of the Himalaya,” 1821: 108–112; “Conservatism and democracy,” 1893: 490–520.

<sup>12</sup> “Lord Curzon, Lord Kitchener and Mr Brodrick,” 1905: 163.

<sup>13</sup> “Voyage à Peking, Manille, et l'Isle de France, faits dans l'intervalle des années 1784 à 1801,” 1809: 257, 260, 265.

<sup>14</sup> “Two Visits to the Tea Countries of...,” 1857: 128.

<sup>15</sup> “Two Visits to the Tea Countries of...,” 1857: 128; “Sketches of India,” 1824: 34; “Persia and the Persian question,” 1893: 490–519.

be completed by a grand tour of the ruins of Rome and other ancient cities.<sup>16</sup> As the number and range of travelers widened, they would enjoy the beauty and profess their astonishment at the number of ruins left in the Middle East from ancient times. They expatiated on such wonders of technology as the remains of ancient irrigation systems. If the inhabitants could once have built these and the Chinese could have led the world in inventions, they could certainly do so again. The fault was in the political system and the prevailing wider culture, hence the justification for Western interference. British commentators and leaders claimed that the imperial project in India, Egypt and elsewhere was designed to "raise" such countries to a level where they would be capable of democracy and self-government.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, travelers in independent countries such as China believed it was the West's duty "now to repay the benefits we have received [from the East] and diffuse the light of Christianity and the triumphs of science over the Eastern world." Where educated Europeans disagreed amongst themselves was over the methods which should be employed to do this.<sup>18</sup> Because of their studies of the rise and decline of nations, educated Westerners also wrote frequently about the threatened decadence of their own society, and the British became particularly sensitive about this at the end of the nineteenth Century due to the relative decline of their power with the growth of industrial and naval competitors. According to one typical article, Britain faced four problems in 1906: racial degeneracy, increases in insanity, infant mortality and a decrease in the birthrate.<sup>19</sup>

Formal education apart, many nineteenth Century novels for boys were written both to entertain and to guide their future behavior. Such fiction taught them that other nations could be expected to behave badly and needed the guidance and often domination of British people. Britons going out to "serve the Empire" were expected to display great courage and to discipline malefactors. The boy heroes in R. M. Ballantine's popular novel, *Coral Island*, were wrecked on a desert island where, amongst other signs of fortitude, they fought against slave traders and pirates, while Ballantine often represented the local peoples as violent and untrustworthy cannibals.<sup>20</sup> The heroes in the equally popular novels by Rider

<sup>16</sup> Stanhope, 1792; Owen, 1833, 1834: 273–307; "The changing East," 1902: 47.

<sup>17</sup> Seeley, 1900: 251; "British rule in Egypt," 1904: 210.

<sup>18</sup> Review of Robert Fortune, 1857: 164–165; Miliband, 1966: 231.

<sup>19</sup> Swiney, 1906: 158.

<sup>20</sup> Ballantine, 1979.

Haggard were paternalistic towards other people. As in Ballantine's books, they frequently had to struggle against Portuguese and Arab slavers, and prevent Africans from brutalizing each other.<sup>21</sup>

Such fiction propagated unattractive stereotypes of other people, and some commentators in elite periodicals were outspokenly racist. There were, for example, Thomas Carlyle's notorious diatribes in the mid-century against democracy, liberalism and the emancipation of slaves. Carlyle, who came from a poor Scottish background, admired strong rulers, hierarchical, aristocratic societies, and the use of force to maintain order.<sup>22</sup> He contemptuously dismissed Africans as "poor blockheads with good dispositions . . . and a turn for nigger melodies," whom the Almighty had made to be servants. But such opinions were notorious, precisely because they were unusual in the pages of the British intellectual reviews and were quickly taken apart by Carlyle's former friend, John Stuart Mill, who defended democracy and liberalism, and denied that Africans were inherently inferior or that the mid nineteenth Century was too obsessed with trying to reduce pain and suffering to face reality.<sup>23</sup> Once slavery had been abolished in the Empire there were few amongst the elite who could be found to mount a serious defense of its values or of the inherent inequality of man. Mill's refutation of Carlyle's views about race and democracy represented the conventional wisdom in articles written for the elite periodicals. Even the Conservatives accepted that democracy was inevitable in Britain because of the politicization which accompanied the development of the press.<sup>24</sup>

Such were the views articulated by many of the educated but the uneducated were bound to be different. They had no knowledge of the age of foreign civilizations and their past achievements and thus of the way in which nations rise and fall. As one commentator wrote of the English village laborer in 1838:

He has grown up and gone into service; and there he is, as simple, as ignorant, and as laborious a creature as one of the wagon-horses that he drives. He sees no newspaper, and if he did, he could not read it; and if he hears his master reading it, ten to one but he drops asleep over it. In fact, he has no interest in it.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Haggard, 1992: 19, 24, 151.

<sup>22</sup> Carlyle, 1849: 670–678; Carlyle, 1867: 319–336.

<sup>23</sup> Mill, 1850: 25–31.

<sup>24</sup> "Conservatism and democracy," 1893: 254–285.

<sup>25</sup> Howitt, 1838: 157.

When such people went overseas as soldiers or traders, they would learn a great deal, but they would never be able to put their newly acquired knowledge into historical context. Even when they acquired some education and became able to write their memoirs, they often showed a very different attitude from the elite's towards other nations and towards colonialism. Frank Richards' account of his experiences and behavior as a private soldier in India around the time of the Russo-Japanese War is a case in point. According to his autobiography, soldiers treated Indians with sadism and contempt. When Indian servants complained to senior officers about beatings and robberies the soldiers lied about their behavior and relished the Indians' inability to gain a hearing. They believed that only naked force kept India under control and that their violence towards helpless civilians cemented their dominance.<sup>26</sup>

The clash between those of Richards' opinion and those who believed that the empire's role was to assist the ruled was always present,<sup>27</sup> but came to the fore after Lord Curzon became Viceroy in 1898, partly because he was one of the rare Viceroys with the confidence to take on the British establishment in India, and partly because he believed so passionately in the benefits of British rule. In April 1902 drunken soldiers from the elite 9th Lancers beat their native cook to death. Curzon immediately saw the full implications of what was happening:

The new wine is beginning to ferment within [the Indian], and he is attaining to a consciousness of equality and freedom... Looking to the future... I recognise that unless this movement [towards violent collisions] is kept in check—and check is only possible not by crushing the aspirations of the native, which are destined to grow, but by controlling the temper of the European—it may, nay it must, reach a pitch when it will boil over in mutiny and rebellion.<sup>28</sup>

Curzon ordered an enquiry but the commanding officer, General Sir Bindon Blood, lied about what had happened and denounced the cook as a liar and a drunkard. The Viceroy responded by banning all the Regiment's leave for six months, though he was widely condemned by Europeans in India. When the 9th Lancers paraded at the Delhi Durbar in 1903 for the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, the Europeans rose to their feet to applaud the regiment and even the main guests showed their sympathy. As Curzon put it, "there rode before me a long line of men, in whose ranks

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<sup>26</sup> Richards, 1936: 75, 79, 143, 150, 175, 341.

<sup>27</sup> "Sketches of India," 1832: 332.

<sup>28</sup> Dilks, 1969: 211.



were most certainly two murderers, amidst the plaudits of their fellow countrymen . . . I felt a certain gloomy pride in having dared to do right.”<sup>29</sup> And so indeed he might, for this was not the only racist murder he had to deal with. In December 1902, an Indian worker on a tea plantation in Assam was whipped to death by a European who was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment. Curzon appealed to the High Court for a heavier sentence, only to have the judge acquit the culprit altogether.

To the end of their lives both Bindon Blood and Richards continued to gloat over the way in which Curzon was humiliated. In contrast, the intellectual journals applauded the “great courage, stupendous industry, and a genius for administration rarely equaled” which he had shown as Viceroy.<sup>30</sup> However, there was a good deal of embarrassment at the gulf revealed between the ideals applauded in Britain and the reality as seen by many of the officers and men who upheld the empire. One commentator in *Blackwoods’ Magazine* even tried to blame the incident on Curzon’s subordinates for showing an “excess of zeal” and a “want of judgment” which exposed what was happening.<sup>31</sup> The division between the Curzon and Richards’ view was to become only too visible in 1919 when British-officered forces shot down hundreds of Indian demonstrators in Amritsar.<sup>32</sup> That, however, proved to be the turning point. If the empire could only be maintained by such methods, then it was doomed.

If attitudes towards imperialism and race varied with social class and between those in Britain and those serving abroad, culturism was pervasive in the nineteenth Century and has increased in some ways in the twentieth Century. A century ago Britons complained about foot-binding in China and the burning of widows in India. Now, because of the growth of feminism, modern writers protest that foreign laws treat women less well than men and, indeed, that Muslims sometimes keep them immured in their houses while in the nineteenth century they just accepted this as the consequence of a different code.<sup>33</sup> The British Secretary of State for Defence dismissed Afghanistan in May 2010 as “a broken Thirteenth Century society,” provoking an Afghan spokesman to complain, “we do

<sup>29</sup> Goradia, 1993: 170.

<sup>30</sup> “British rule in Egypt,” 1904: 549–550; “A great viceroyalty,” 1905: 191, 444.

<sup>31</sup> “Lord Curzon, Lord Kitchener and Mr Brodrick,” 1905: 732.

<sup>32</sup> Draper, 1985; Collett, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> “Observations on the Mussulmans of India: A description of their manners, customs, habits and religious opinions, made during a twelve years’ residence in their society by Mrs Meer Hassan Ali,” 1832: 233; Bin Ladin, 2004; “Jailed for adultery and murder—the child forced to marry at 12,” 2006; “Return to servitude,” 2009; Reid, 2009; “Respect our values or stay away, Brown tells immigrants.” 2010.

not feel there is mutual respect.”<sup>34</sup> Honor killing is regarded as abhorrent today as it was a century ago, and those immigrants who commit such murders are tried in British courts although their actions are part of their culture.<sup>35</sup> Each culture tends to assume that its moral codes are superior to others and Western leaders and electorates routinely insist on their right to protect these at home and project them where their forces are deployed abroad.<sup>36</sup>

As today, educated Britons were sometimes willing to admit shortcomings in their own culture and behavior in the nineteenth century, although their condemnations of other European nations’ repression of Asian and African peoples were much more frequent than criticisms of the British Empire. Ranee Margaret of Sarawak, who was of Anglo-French descent, explained at length in her memoirs how much more she liked the local people than the wives of the British officials employed there who spent their time bickering and took no interest in Oriental life.<sup>37</sup> More typical were the criticisms in the *Westminster Review* for 1834, which lashed the Spanish for the treatment of Muslims in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the French for their repression of the Algerians in its own time. In the same volume a reviewer dismissed as nonsense Achille Murat’s suggestions that the “uncivilized races” should be destroyed and that Africans have no personal feelings.<sup>38</sup> 70 years later, a writer in the same journal presciently warned of the dangers of racism in South Africa and argued that only education and political equality could save that country.<sup>39</sup>

The conventional wisdom voiced by the British intellectual elite in the nineteenth century was thus predominantly liberal and well-informed but also ethnocentric, unrealistic and self-satisfied. For themselves, they stressed professed intentions rather than actualities, but in their judgment of other nations’ imperialism they usually reversed the priorities. They put the most optimistic gloss on the nature and effects of British imperialism, and generally turned a blind eye to the racist brutality shown by British

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<sup>34</sup> “Afghans accuse Liam Fox of racism,” 2010.

<sup>35</sup> “How model’s death fall exposed polygamy in Britain,” 2008; “Wife gives evidence against husband accused of daughter’s ‘honour killing,’” 2009; Sharma, 2010; Kim, 2000.

<sup>36</sup> Prentice and Miller, 1999; “Facing death every day, the MP who dares to stand up for women’s rights,” 2007; “The burka, a symbol of repression has no place in a free society,” 2009; “Swiss back right-wing minaret ban,” 2009; “Afghan leader repels US efforts to oust his brother,” 2010. “General who said that shooting people was fun is set for top job,” 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Brooke, 1984 [1934]: 46, 52, 61, 69.

<sup>38</sup> “Prospects of the Coloured races,” 1834: 132, 168.

<sup>39</sup> Lightbody, 1906: 41.

troops in India and elsewhere, either because they saw these as embarrassing exceptions, or because they believed so fervently in the imperial project and thought that the advantages far outweighed the disadvantages.<sup>40</sup> As culturists, they wanted their material, political and moral culture to be transferred to others. What they proposed was not very different from what they were attempting with the working class at home whose education occupied so many of the pages of the elite periodicals.<sup>41</sup> They saw culture as malleable, but they also knew only too well that empires rose and fell. However, they did not admit that their own culture was based on force alone as Frank Richards and his like contended. It is in this context that the next section will look at what elite commentators said about Japan when the Japanese were starting to emulate the Europeans by developing their industries and building an Asian Empire beginning with Formosa and Korea.

### *European Commentaries on Japan*

#### *The Writer*

Of the many books about Japan written before the growth of British disillusionment with that country, one of the most famous was published by the Greek-American author and teacher, Lafcadio Hearn in 1904. Hearn was well-known for his comments on Japanese topics, although he was disliked at the time by some missionaries for spreading Darwinist ideas in Japan, and he remained controversial after his death.<sup>42</sup> Decades later one writer would criticize Hearn's final book for misrepresenting and idealizing Shintoism, while another would describe it as "for long the West's best source of information on the subject," and an American diplomat would argue that Hearn had been helped by his Celtic mysticism and Hellenic paganism to penetrate what other Westerners had failed to see.<sup>43</sup>

Hearn spent 14 years in Japan writing and teaching. He wrote of the "delicate perfection of workmanship, the light strength and grace of objects" which Japan produced, and of the strangeness of Japanese culture

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<sup>40</sup> Hobson, 1901: 29–40; Playne, 1928: 51.

<sup>41</sup> "Hints to philanthropists or a collective view of practical means of improving the condition of the poor," 1824: 96; "The manufacturing poor: The means of elevating their moral condition," 1849: 127; Swiney, 1906: 158.

<sup>42</sup> Henning, 2000: 85–86.

<sup>43</sup> Holtom, 1947: 209; Stoetzel, 1955: 15; Sands, 1987: 93.

to any Westerner. He praised the courtesy of the Japanese and the absence of quarrels and crimes in their society. Everything, Hearn believed, was determined by the basic religious cult of ancestor worship or Shintoism and by the associated domination of the family and the wider community over the individual. Within the family the Japanese maintained a strict hierarchy headed by the husband or the eldest son: "by the religion of the household every individual was ruled in every action of domestic life, so, by the religion of the village or district the family was ruled in all its relations with the outside world."<sup>44</sup> Those who quarreled, gossiped or failed to show proper respect were reported to the village elders. Egregious offenders were punished by ostracism and, at worst, banishment. Expulsion meant that a man was unlikely to be employed elsewhere and fell into the group of non-persons. With such tight moral and social discipline law and custom were effectively identical.

Japan was a communal, not an individualist society and the reverse of democratic. It was "the difference between the most despotic form of communism founded upon the most ancient form of religion" and the "unlimited individual right of competition" in the West. Japan had always also been dominated by the military or samurai class even if the clan chiefs claimed to worship the Emperor, the "Son of Heaven." All the men and women of the samurai class were trained to commit suicide at their lord's command, or to preserve their honor or in protest. They also had to avenge the killing of their lord or head of family.

The threat to Japan's independence from the West in the late nineteenth century persuaded leading Japanese that these intense loyalties had to be focused on the Japanese state rather than on individual clans. They also emphasized Shintoism and Emperor worship at the expense of Buddhism. Social discipline remained strong even if people could now leave their villages to go to the towns to find work or to emigrate. Japanese politics were also still dominated by loyalties to individual politicians rather than to ideas, and individual freedom was constrained so that a man "must act and be acted upon in ways differing little from those of ancient time."<sup>45</sup> Amongst the consequences were the immense efforts made by students and others to follow Imperial orders and learn from the West, and the dedication with which the Japanese sacrificed themselves in the war against China.

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<sup>44</sup> Hearn, 1924: 93.

<sup>45</sup> Hearn, 1924: 93, 104–108, 279, 329.

Hearn's picture of Japan was tentative and sensitive. His subtitle was "an attempt at interpretation" because he recognized that there were many aspects of Japanese history and culture that he did not understand. He had no desire to upset his Japanese hosts and friends, and he would not have wanted to accentuate the swing amongst some Japanese intellectuals at this time against the West, which replicated the oscillations in European opinion about the Orient in general and Japan in particular referred to previously. After the opening of Japan there was a period when the Japanese elite idealized Western culture from dance music to literature, but those who visited the West were often shocked by the level of crime and the general gap between the ideal and reality. They returned to Japan determined to expose what they saw as Western hypocrisy and to reawaken their countrymen to the virtues of their own culture.<sup>46</sup>

### *The Soldier*

While Japan was learning from the West, it employed European officers to advise its armed forces—predominantly Germans to train the army and Britons to help the navy. Some western officers were also sent to Japan to learn the language and to report on its progress, while others were detached for much shorter periods to report on particular events. This process reached a peak during the Russo-Japanese War, when numerous officers from Germany, France, Australia, Canada and elsewhere were seconded to Tokyo to accompany the Japanese armies and observe the fighting in Manchuria. Britain dispatched three officers at a time to report on the Russian army and, because of the close alliance with Japan, some two dozen to Tokyo. The officer who is best remembered is General Sir Ian Hamilton, because he published two widely read volumes on his experiences and was to go on to command the abortive Dardanelles expedition during the World War I.

Naturally, Hamilton's short acquaintance with things Japanese meant that his was a much more impressionistic view than Hearn's. Because of the date of its publication, he may not have read Hearn's book before he left Britain for Japan, but Hamilton's account often echoed his contemporary's. His admiration for their artistic skills and for the courage of their armed forces was unbounded. "Our allies" he wrote "are warlike by taste and tradition; and upon the patriotism which they have absorbed with

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<sup>46</sup> Hirakawa, 2005: 210–226.

their mothers' milk, their government has been careful to graft initiative, quickness, and intelligence."<sup>47</sup> Hamilton reveled in the adventure and heroism of the Russo-Japanese War, and belittled the humdrum everyday economic life of his own nation.<sup>48</sup> Clearly, he was an enthusiastic adherent of the prevalent social Darwinism of his time, and it was this which made him such a strong admirer of the self-sacrifice and discipline of the Japanese soldiers. Like many other commentators, he was to become a fervent critic of Japanese colonialism, but, unlike the majority, he had served for many years in India and knew very well what the Indian Army was like. He can only have believed that Japanese brutality was fiercer and more pervasive. However, he never lost his admiration for Japanese courage and discipline in wartime.<sup>49</sup>

### *The Journalists*

Once Russia had been defeated by Japan in 1905 and the ensuing Treaty of Portsmouth enshrined Japan's dominance over East Asia, American and European commentators turned their minds to the implications of Japan's successes. For some, this meant a rapid change in their view of Britain's Japanese ally and they spread their growing skepticism amongst the wider public. Of no one is this more true than of G.E. Morrison, *The Times*' influential and opinionated correspondent in Peking. Morrison had encouraged the Japanese to fight the Tsarist Empire to prevent it from gaining control of Manchuria.<sup>50</sup> During the Portsmouth peace negotiations, he had deplored the reports sent by his paper's Washington correspondent, which he felt were much too sympathetic towards the Russian negotiators. However, within months he had become suspicious about Japan's ambitions and behavior in Korea and Manchuria. By April 1907 he was writing "everyone I meet tells me the same story of Japanese crookedness and deceit." In the end, the divergence between Morrison's sympathy for the Chinese and fears of Japan's intentions led to a decisive rift between Morrison and Valentine Chirol, his superior on *The Times*.<sup>51</sup>

Many of the other journalists who had accompanied the Japanese armies, such as *The Daily Mail's* correspondent F.A. McKenzie, shared

<sup>47</sup> Hamilton, 1906, I: 11, 14.

<sup>48</sup> Hamilton, 1906, II: 364.

<sup>49</sup> Hamilton, 1923.

<sup>50</sup> Hui-Min, 1976, I: 219, 221.

<sup>51</sup> Hui-Min, 1976, I: 10–14, 382, 383, 402.

Morrison's concerns.<sup>52</sup> Until the Russo-Japanese War, McKenzie had, like Morrison, been an admirer of Japan and a supporter of what he saw as its efforts to reform Korea. In his book on the war, *From Tokyo to Tiflis*, McKenzie spoke of the poverty and dirt prevalent in Korea, and the incompetence of their officials and soldiers. In common with other observers, he praised the courage of the Japanese and the efficiency of their army when compared with the slow-moving and disorganized Russians. However, within a few months he had turned against the Japanese. He believed that their policies were bound to bring them into conflict with Britain and that their soldiers and other agents in Korea were brutal to the inhabitants. He became one of the most vocal critics of Japanese colonialism in Korea, criticizing it in a string of books. Morrison knew McKenzie and their views were mutually reinforcing. *The Times*' correspondent told Valentine Chirol in September 1906 that McKenzie "is a capable and experienced man and has spared no pains to form a correct judgment of Japanese actions in Korea," and that he and most other British people in East Asia were in agreement with McKenzie.<sup>53</sup> McKenzie, in turn, tried to recruit Morrison to work for *The Daily Mail*, telling him that its owner, Lord Northcliffe, was prepared to pay him whatever salary he asked to report on East Asian affairs.

A critic might say that at some subconscious level, Japan's success brought out the hidden racism in these tough and experienced observers. Morrison was an Australian and McKenzie a Canadian, and the treatment in their countries of the Aborigines and Native Americans may have ingrained notions of racial hierarchy. One might also argue that they were observing the early state of the Japanese Empire and this was likely to be harsh when they judged it in comparison with the later stages of the British Empire where repression was latent. All one can say is that they showed sympathy for the Chinese and Koreans and increasing alienation from Japan.

### *The Commentator*

The changing attitude towards Japan was not confined to British journalists concerned with the effect of Japan's rise on China and Korea. The American writer Homer Lea claimed to have written much of his book *The Valor of Ignorance* just after President Theodore Roosevelt had

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<sup>52</sup> McKenzie, 2009 [1908].

<sup>53</sup> Hui-Min, 1976: 382.



encouraged the combatants to sign the Treaty of Portsmouth. His work was a sustained attack on what he saw as his countrymen's unwillingness to face up to the coming war with Japan. In many ways, Lea's position was similar to Ian Hamilton's, but, while Hamilton had praised Japanese bravery and pugnacity as demonstrated by the Russo-Japanese War, it was just these characteristics which worried the American. According to Homer Lea, "since the Russian War, Japan has directed her undivided attention to that conflict which—should it end in victory—will give half the world over to the imperious barony of her daimos [sic] and samurai."<sup>54</sup> The war would be brought about by Japanese ambitions and the combination of American mistreatment of Japanese immigrants and inadequate military preparations. The Japanese were covering their preparations by subterfuges but "every move is planned, every emergency is taken into consideration; the American armament and preparation, or lack of it, are in all phases tabulated." The United States alone stood between Japan and the domination of the Pacific because Lea believed that Russia had been "crushed for all time" and China was not worth reckoning. On the other hand, the American controlled the Philippines and the Ladrones, which the Japanese felt they had to take for strategic reasons, and Alaska, which had the coal the Japanese needed.<sup>55</sup> Australia and New Zealand—with all their wealth—would then be at Japan's mercy.

Lea believed that the American racial prejudice against Japanese settlement on the West coast would be the main political cause of the coming war. The "unassimilable" Orientals settled in California were deprived of the vote and persecuted by municipalities and even the police:

They cannot appeal to the courts where their case may be determined by jury, for the jury has already decided that as heathen they cannot be believed under oath. It has come to pass on the Pacific coast that the word of one Occidental is considered more worthy of credence than the oaths of an entire colony of Orientals. They have ceased to look for justice in cases determined by juries.

Orientals were treated as lepers, stoned and driven out of some communities. Such indignities "are provocative of a legitimate *casus belli* on the part of the nation whose people have been treated in variance with the rights and immunities granted them by existing treaties."<sup>56</sup> Moreover, while the Chinese had taken these insults lying down, the Japanese

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<sup>54</sup> Lea, 1909: 171.

<sup>55</sup> Lea, 1909: 185.

<sup>56</sup> Lea, 1909: 179.

immigrants were unlikely to do so and the Japanese government could store up the anger of its people until the moment it decided that it was ready to protect its diaspora. When this happens, “the world will regard Japan’s position as not only lawful, but justly taken.” In other words, Homer Lea believed that “the world” or elite opinion was generally hostile to racism, regardless of what the ordinary people of California or Australia might think.

Homer Lea’s jeremiad might be dismissed as extreme had it not been for the way in which his works were endorsed by senior American officers. Lieutenant General Adna R. Chaffee was one of the United States’ most prominent officers at this period, having served in the Civil War and then in the Spanish-American War. Later, he had led the American contingent protecting the foreign embassies during the Boxer Rebellion in China and served as Army Chief of Staff from 1904 to 1906. Chaffee wrote the first introduction for *The Valor of Ignorance*, in which he claimed that he did not “know of any work in military literature published in the United States more deserving of the attention of men who study the history of the United States and the science of war.”<sup>57</sup> Chaffee agreed with Homer Lea that the United States was a tempting target for invaders and that its militia were nearly useless to defend it. Major General Story’s supplementary introduction supported Lea’s view that “no nation has long been permitted to enjoy the blessings of peace, unless able to safeguard such blessings by force of arms.” Like Hamilton, Story felt that the Chinese were reaping the reward for not valuing the science of war, and he stressed not only the dangers from Japan to America’s Pacific coast, but also Homer Lea’s warnings about the German threat from the Atlantic.<sup>58</sup>

### *The Writer and Traveler*

Five years later, another American writer, Price Collier, spent a year touring Asia as a preparation for writing *The West in the East*, his assessment of the changes brought about by Japan’s successes. However, unlike Lea, Collier believed that it was Japan’s approach to the outside world which would be the cause of future disputes. Like some other post-Russo-Japanese War Western visitors to Japan, Collier criticized Hearn and earlier writers for their gullibility, and explained it by their fascination with the novelty of Japanese culture and the speed with which Japanese

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<sup>57</sup> Lea, 1909: xi.

<sup>58</sup> Lea, 1909: xix.

development progressed in the second half of the nineteenth Century. According to Collier, what now impressed many foreigners who had contact with Japan was:

Their fussy and self-conscious politeness; their comical vanity and self-satisfaction; their parochial assumption that all the world is wrong, they alone right; their lack of consideration for others, particularly for their women... their new feeling of a scarcely-veiled contempt for the white race... All these characteristics, overlaid with a lacquer of hardness and a national selfishness which no European ever penetrates.<sup>59</sup>

Plainly, Collier lacked any of the sensitivity to Japanese feelings which had influenced Hearn and others. His comments revealed his resentment that such a "new" nation should judge those from whom it was learning its technology and statesmanship. He believed that the Oriental nation made itself ridiculous by "trying to appear what it is not; they are trying to do things which are not natural to them; trying to assume an equality with others along lines that are foreign to them."<sup>60</sup> In more material terms, Collier repeated the widespread Western traders' views that the Japanese were trying to exclude others from China, and were pirating foreign trademarks and books. In the past, they had copied their ideas and technology from India, China and Korea. Now, they copied from the West—they had shown no originality. In terms of foreign policy, he suggested that the Japanese saw the Anglo-Japanese Alliance as a favor they had bestowed on the British, and that their colonies were characterized by repression of the local people:

In all the months I was in India I never saw a white man ill-use a brown one... [in Manchuria and Korea] never a day passed that I did not see the rough and often violent treatment of Koreans and Manchus by Japanese soldiers, police and the lower class of labour employed there.<sup>61</sup>

Collier cannot have been unaware of Lord Curzon's confrontation with the Indian army and was apparently determined to argue that this was exceptional. It also suited some Western analysts to emphasize Japanese feelings of superiority towards the Chinese, Koreans and Ainus living in their own country in order to demonstrate that the West was not alone in having such feelings towards other nations.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Collier, 1911: 432.

<sup>60</sup> Collier, 1911: 436.

<sup>61</sup> Collier, 1911: 441, 454, 526; Dikötter, 1997.

<sup>62</sup> Henning, 2000: 150–157.

*The Medical Doctor*

By no means all commentators at this time showed Collier's prejudice against the Japanese or Morrison's suspicions of their intentions. The Irish doctor Johnston Abraham practiced in London and achieved distinction during World War I. In 1911 he published an anonymous account of a journey he made as a ship's surgeon to the Far East which went through 31 editions, eight of them before World War I. The chapters on Japan are far more sympathetic to the Japanese than many of the post-Russo-Japanese War publications, perhaps because Abraham was less affected by the social Darwinism of the more politically conscious journalists. Like Hearn, he was fascinated by the way in which everything in Japan, from art to architecture was so very different from their Western equivalents: "the startling thing is that the Japanese are not wrong, that they are often very, very right, that their line of evolution is as complete as, perhaps even more complete than, our own."<sup>63</sup> Abraham saw the Japanese hostility to the Russians and their secretiveness, which led to him being briefly arrested for photographing a restricted area of Moji. He also quoted the cynical views of his Captain about the Japanese relationship with Europe:

It makes me sick to hear the 'P & O.ist' talking frothy nonsense about the advancement, culture, civilisation, the mission of Japan. It's all tommy-rot. The reason Europe respects Japan is because she has learnt all the latest scientific ways of killing, and can hold her own at the game. Between ourselves, the Japanese hold us all in contempt as barbarians. They use us because they want to learn certain useful things from us; and as soon as they've mastered it they throw us aside.<sup>64</sup>

The captain then went on to voice the familiar complaint about Japanese mistreatment of the Koreans. But Abraham himself plainly enjoyed his time in Japan and reveled in the landscape, architect and customs. He became a great admirer of Japanese women and sympathized with the Second Mate of his ship who had fallen in love with a hostess in a tea-garden even though he knew that marrying her would tie him down and stymie his future career.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Abraham, 1918: 118, 124.

<sup>64</sup> Abraham, 1918: 150.

<sup>65</sup> Abraham, 1918: 164.

*The Clergy*

The historian Joseph Henning has recently argued that many American missionaries doubted that Orientals could progress without absorbing Christian ideas. Such ideas were not, however, universal. One of the most prescient books on the politics of the region was written in 1910 by the clergyman Lord William Gascoyne-Cecil, the brother of Lord Robert Cecil and son of the Prime Minister Lord Salisbury. Gascoyne-Cecil later became a Bishop of Exeter noted for his eccentricities. Cecil emphasized the humiliations heaped on the Chinese by their defeat at Japanese hands in 1895 and by the way in which Russia and Japan then fought their battles within Chinese territory. Yet, to the Chinese, the Japanese victory “demonstrated that there was no essential inferiority of the East to the West and that when an Eastern race adopted Western military methods it demonstrated itself superior to the most powerful of the Western races.” Cecil rightly insisted that the battle of Mukden, the final Japanese victory on land, was a turning point in world history.<sup>66</sup> He forecast, even more presciently, that China might equally become a “competitor in trade and a place where the capital of Europe will be invested” because “the great advantages which China can offer of cheap labour, cheap coal and cheap carriage... will have the effect of attracting to China a very large number of the world’s industries.”<sup>67</sup> China might also be a military rival to the West, but Cecil believed that “the most competent judges affirm that Chinese military greatness will always make for peace... In fact it is the continuance of China’s military weakness rather than the growth of her military power which is most likely to disturb the political atmosphere.”<sup>68</sup>

It was in the all-important realm of ideas that Cecil feared Western influence on the Chinese because he believed that they were more likely to absorb the bad rather than the good aspects of Western culture. In particular, he feared that over-impressed by the success of Western imperialism, they might reject the wisdom of Confucius without adopting the Christian codes which Cecil wished to spread—not because these were a *sine qua non* of progress, but because they were desirable in themselves. Finally, he stressed the discrepancy in Britain between elite and mass views of other nations; many of his “humbler” parishioners in England

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<sup>66</sup> Gascoyne-Cecil, 1910: 13.

<sup>67</sup> Gascoyne-Cecil, 1910: 28.

<sup>68</sup> Gascoyne-Cecil, 1910: 28.

believed that China was “only a degree off barbarism,” although it had a more ancient civilization than Europe’s.

The American missionary, teacher and writer Sidney Gulick was equally optimistic about the future of Japan, where he taught for 25 years and came to admire the hard work, enterprise and adaptability of his hosts. His book *The American Japanese Problem*, published in 1914, took up some of the arguments against the mistreatment of Japanese immigrants in California used by Homer Lea but instead of stressing the importance of the United States making military preparations in case the Japanese attacked, Gulick called for a “new American Oriental policy.” He believed that:

If America proves to Asia that one white people at least does not despise Asiatics as such nor seek to exploit them, but rather on the basis of respect and justice seeks their real prosperity, they will discover that what they feared as the White Peril is, in fact, an inestimable benefit. And that change of feeling will bring to naught the Yellow Peril now dreaded by the whites.<sup>69</sup>

This could only be done if the United States dropped discriminatory immigration policies, gave Japanese and Chinese immigrants citizenship and began to accept the contribution which Oriental peoples could make to the country. Americans also needed to recognize that misunderstandings often occurred because of cultural differences and that when these were overcome, Oriental immigrants into the United States would become loyal and hard working citizens. Gulick’s view of the impact of American immigration laws on sensitive Japanese feelings was as prescient as Cecil’s views on the ability of China to attract Western investments. Modern historians have described such sensitivity as one of the central factors influencing Japanese policy towards the West and, indeed, the whole international system, in the period leading up to World War II.<sup>70</sup>

### *The Diplomats*

Ernest Satow was one of the best-informed Western diplomatic representatives in Tokyo at the end of the nineteenth Century. Born in London in 1843, he lived in Japan for most of the two decades following 1862, working in the British mission. He learned Japanese and devoted himself to the study of the country. He also became a firm advocate of the Meiji

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<sup>69</sup> Gulick, 1914: 303.

<sup>70</sup> Shimazu, 1998.

Restoration. In 1895, he returned as British Minister and stayed there until 1900, when he exchanged places with the British Minister in Beijing, Sir Claude MacDonald. Satow remained in China until 1906, bridging the period between the Boxer Rebellion and the Russo-Japanese War. Thus, his published diaries and letters show his reactions to the dramatic changes in this period.

It is difficult to generalize about Satow's views of Japan. What is clear is that, as a good diplomat, he tried to make a detached and realistic appraisal of British and Japanese interests and propensities, and did not swing between idealizing and criticizing Japan as a result of the Russo-Japanese War. As early as October 1896, when he was Minister in Tokyo, he wrote to Lord Salisbury, "I cannot help feeling that the Japanese are likely to be a troublesome nation. They will take every opportunity of manifesting their sympathy with Asiatics under the domination of Europe and will not stick at intrigue of any sort with malcontents." He even suggested that the government was encouraging Japanese to settle in Hawaii and elsewhere so they could make trouble at a later date.<sup>71</sup> Paradoxically, around this time the Japanese frequently asked him about the possibility of negotiating an Anglo-Japanese alliance, and the Japanese newspapers also pushed for this, but Satow believed that the Japanese would favor the Russians in the very long run because the British traders were constantly causing friction with Japan.<sup>72</sup>

When Satow was transferred from Tokyo to Beijing in 1900, he became deeply involved in the negotiations between the Chinese authorities and the representatives of the various states which had intervened to crush the Boxer Rebellion. He tried to impress on the Chinese the shock produced by their attack on the embassies in Beijing while doing what he could to preserve China's independence, and he deprecated the size of the indemnity which the intervening powers imposed on the Chinese. In the end, the Russian determination to hold on to Manchuria and its increasing propensity to intervene in Korea sparked the Russo-Japanese War in 1904.<sup>73</sup>

Satow's personal outlook was opaque. Above all, he never acknowledged the existence of his Japanese mistress or their sons. Although the editor of his diaries and papers, Ian Ruxton, suggests that his failure to acknowledge his "family" was because of his ambitions rather than Satow's

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<sup>71</sup> Ruxton, 1998: 303.

<sup>72</sup> Ruxton, 1998: 234.

<sup>73</sup> Ruxton, 1998: 321–325.



own feelings, it must have reflected the prejudices which Satow believed operated in the Foreign Office and elsewhere.

Moreover, according to Ruxton, Satow seemed "at any rate to have retained throughout his life a sense that European culture was greatly superior to Oriental, despite his detailed studies of Japan and, to a lesser extent, Siam." He never returned to Japan after his retirement and he told a friend, "I cannot forget that I was born in a civilized Christian country, and look on such men with pity. If I ever find myself in danger of overcoming this righteous prejudice I shall apply for sick leave."<sup>74</sup> However, just as he had opposed the heavy indemnity levied on China, Satow tried to help the Siamese regain sovereignty over British subjects in their territory and, in Ruxton's words, seemed increasingly to take "an anti-imperialist stance, in marked contrast to his masters in England."

His stance during the Russo-Japanese War had to reflect his official position. He dismissed the Chinese pleas suggesting that Britain should offer to mediate at the last minute, and he was plainly confident that Japan would prevail over Russia. No doubt he took pleasure in reminding the German Minister in Beijing that the Japanese "had been taught German methods of thoroughness by the [German] officers attached to the general staff before 1894." While his German colleague was concerned that if the Japanese were victorious they would establish a "virtual protectorate" over China, Satow believed that the European powers would insist on having a say, and that:

The Japanese had not a light hand and their endeavours to exercise a predominant influence in Corea in 1894–5 had been altogether unsuccessful. Like most people of determined character, they failed in tact because they could not bring themselves to humour other people's sensibilities... I did not anticipate that the Japanese would be any more successful with China than they had been with Corea.<sup>75</sup>

The German representative agreed that the Japanese were hated in Korea and not much liked in China, and Satow's French colleague concurred. Naturally, the French ambassador also hoped that his country's Russian allies would win. Satow told him that he had always tried to restrain the Japanese and had warned the Japanese statesman Itō Hirobumi that the doubling of the size of the Japanese army which had taken place over the last decade would be regarded as a general menace. At a later

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<sup>74</sup> Ruxton, 1998: 421, 185, 162.

<sup>75</sup> Ruxton, 2006, II: 13, 20, 27.

meeting, the French Minister said that Russians would be victorious in the end, but that “he looked on the Japanese as a dangerous people, whose object was to get rid of all Europeans, and considered [the Anglo-Japanese Alliance] has been a great imprudence.” Satow responded that the alliance had limited the war, implying that the French might have been drawn in on the Russian side if the British had not then been committed to help the Japanese in such an event.<sup>76</sup>

The experienced career diplomat Lloyd Griscom was the American Ambassador in Tokyo during the Russo-Japanese War. His memoirs appeared nearly three decades later, when American-Japanese relations were heading towards crisis, but Griscom’s views were still sympathetic towards the Japanese. Admittedly, Griscom stressed the difficulty of breaking through Japanese reserve, the formalities of the court and the dangers of misunderstanding a culture where, for example, everyone habitually deprecated his own possessions. Griscom also noted the Japanese slapstick sense of humor. He recalled Itō Hirobumi tricking a German doctor into thinking he had summoned him to his bedside while he had a lady in bed with him only to jump out and reveal it was a wax dummy someone had sent him from Madam Tussauds. He also recorded Baron Katsura reveling in telling the whole cabinet how Griscom had tricked him into returning Jack London’s camera when it had been confiscated because the novelist had taken photographs in a forbidden zone.<sup>77</sup>

Like other commentators, Griscom was impressed by Japanese courage and patriotism during the war, which he attributed to the desire to please the soldiers’ forefathers, the implicit obedience to the Emperor instilled by the schools and the deliberate spread amongst the whole population of the code of Bushido (Jpn. *bushidō*). Griscom was apprised of the dangers this brought when his carriage was threatened after the compromise with Russia and the signing of the treaty ending the war. The United States embassy had to be guarded by soldiers with fixed bayonets and Griscom received letters telling him that the mob would return to express its opinion of the United States for depriving Japan of the fruits of its victory.<sup>78</sup>

William Franklin Sands was much less famous than Satow or Griscom, but he spent a number of years as a diplomat, first in Japan and later in Korea. Many years later, his thoughtful and sensitive account of both societies was published. He believed that it was because Western people had

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<sup>76</sup> Ruxton, 2006: 35, 52.

<sup>77</sup> Griscom, 1940: 236, 246.

<sup>78</sup> Griscom, 1940: 251, 262.

forgotten so much of their own history that they found Japanese difficult to comprehend. Medieval chivalry, for example, had some resemblance to Bushido, the warrior code of honor, while the fact that Japanese traders had been a despised social class within Japan explained why they had come to be regarded as so unscrupulous in much of Asia. The sailors who came into Japanese ports quarreled with the Japanese over women and did not understand that Japanese regarded a punch as a deadly insult: "the Japanese does not fight except to disable or kill. Fighting is part of war."<sup>79</sup> Sands' conclusion was that Japan's diplomacy and colonial policy were determined by its culture. They feared the Europeans and they responded with the ruthless determination of a nation of warriors.

Sands clearly meditated long and hard about imperialism. He saw how Korea was both beautiful and degraded. He admired the poetry and apparent gentleness of the people, but he also emphasized the squalor in which so many had to live, the utter incompetence and ignorance of the government and its feeble Emperor. He understood why the British director of customs McLeavy Brown would not allow the Koreans to manage their financial affairs—as they would have frittered the revenue away on useless trivialities. Sands also noted how the American judge W.N. Denny struggled for years to persuade the Koreans to follow his country's example, only to show his "gradual disheartenment with the impossibility of teaching an unwilling Oriental people the basis of such a constitutional system as the American . . . Vestiges of his work remained, in spite of the inertia of the Koreans."<sup>80</sup>

### *Conclusion*

This brief survey of comments by Western writers on Asia and Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shows that attitudes were more complex and sophisticated than many assume today. Educated readers in the nineteenth century were better informed about other countries than their modern equivalents. It is now forgotten how much time and effort was taken, and how much danger risked, in exploration and discovery.<sup>81</sup> We have also forgotten the way serious journals focused on other nations and studied the geography, history and culture of their countries.

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<sup>79</sup> Sands, 1987: 27.

<sup>80</sup> Sands, 1987: 50.

<sup>81</sup> "Guizot's edition of Gibbon," 1833: 121–124.

There is simply nothing like this in their British equivalents today. Specialist journals may cover some of the same ground but the elite British periodicals are nothing like as informative about other cultures as *The Quarterly Review*, *The Edinburgh Review* or *The Westminster Review* were 150 years ago. Indeed, it is salutary to read through such modern journals as *The London Review of Books* and to note their focus on Europe and the United States, and to compare the much wider geographical coverage for a similar period by their nineteenth Century predecessors.

Drawing conclusions from any small sample is dangerous, and making positive claims about a negative is even more so, but most of the leading diplomats, churchmen and journalists surveyed in the second part of this chapter were not overtly racist and did not generally imply that the Chinese, Japanese or Koreans were somehow intrinsically incapable of competing with Europeans in invention, trade or government. Their views fitted into the general pattern of comments in elite periodicals about other cultures because they saw the East as a great civilization which had fallen into decline just as the classical world had declined some 1,600 years before. Again, it is now forgotten how much better-read our educated ancestors were in the classics. It was very different amongst the poor because they were not aware of the achievements of other civilizations and were not soaked in classical literature.

Two factors seem to have determined the change in attitudes towards Japan after 1905: social Darwinism and the emergence of Japanese imperialism. Each imperial power had an ideology which justified its actions. This ideology was supposed to reflect the behavior of its imperial administrators, but the first section of this chapter stressed the difference between British ideology and the behavior of some of their representatives. Each power tended to judge imperial rivals not by their rivals' ideology but by their behavior, while they judged their own empire generally by their ideology and regarded any discrepancy between the two as unfortunate lapses rather than as intrinsic to the whole effort. Consequently, American and British commentators judged Japan's behavior in Korea and later in China and elsewhere by the actions of their representatives, not by what Tokyo said about its policies.<sup>82</sup>

At the same time, the prevalent social Darwinism influenced many of the educated class in their reaction to the Russo-Japanese War. This meant that analysts and governments were acutely sensitive to any change in the

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<sup>82</sup> Skya, 2009.

balance of power and that rising powers such as Germany, Japan and the United States were regarded with suspicion. After the Russo-Japanese War, *The Daily Telegraph's* veteran correspondent, Bennet Burleigh, concluded that Britain would have been wiser to ally with France or the United States rather than Japan, and that if another war broke out between Japan and a Western power, few states would have the capacity to send a fleet around the world to challenge Japanese predominance.<sup>83</sup> Thus, reasons of language and culture made it easiest for British writers to accept the United States, however patronizing their comments on its progress.<sup>84</sup> However, Japan, with its very different traditions, was regarded with less wariness than Germany. The bulk of the British warships on the China station were brought home to face the German High Seas Fleet after the Russo-Japanese War, not the other way round.

At the same time, the foreboding that their own preponderance would soon be "one with Nineveh and Tyre" over-shadowed British attitudes. The educated were notoriously concerned with the dangers of Western decadence. This tendency was exaggerated in Britain due to the relative decline in its power at the end of the nineteenth century and the deficiencies which the Boer War had exposed. It is this fear of relative decline—and not entrenched racism—which generally explains the sensitivity of most elite commentators to the rise of Japan.

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<sup>83</sup> Towle, 2006: 34.

<sup>84</sup> Trollope, 1984.

PART TWO

EAST ASIAN RACE THEORIES, RACIAL POLICIES AND RACISM





## CHAPTER TWELVE

### A CERTAIN WHITENESS OF BEING: CHINESE PERCEPTIONS OF SELF BY THE BEGINNING OF EUROPEAN CONTACT

Don J. Wyatt

Conventional wisdom dictates that any consciousness of differences in human attributes should only arise within a context in which such traits are variable. To put the matter another way, we should expect an awareness of physical difference to arise only where those kinds of differences are either genuine or substantive enough, at the very least, to be perceived as such. Yet, historically, we have tended to view few places as more antithetical to these premises than China. So uniformly have we held Chinese civilization as having developed almost entirely in isolation and its discernible cultures as having always been comprised of peoples who were entirely homogeneous in racial and ethnic terms that China emerges for us as an entity populated by individuals lacking any receptiveness to internal physical variation among its own inhabitants. Indeed, as the late authority Raymond Dawson was to state the matter, "Among the peoples which inhabited this part of the world there were no striking racial distinctions in physical appearance, so it was those people who had not absorbed Chinese culture who were thought of as alien."<sup>1</sup> With such an understanding, beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the most respected scholars of China's earliest civilization increasingly abandoned their tentative theories of development by diffusion—having come to regard China as a land where no such theory could aptly apply, basically because it so wholly lacked any deducible infusions from outside.

Nevertheless, with progress most assuredly and inexorably come advancements in our knowledge, and we disserve ourselves if we allow customary interpretations to go unquestioned and, wherever warranted, unchallenged. With regard to the assumption of the insularity of its civilization, we now know ancient China was hardly as isolated from the relatively far-flung major contemporaneous cultures of West Asia and outer Europe as once thought. As the recent scholarship of Andrew Sherratt has

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<sup>1</sup> Dawson, 1981: 70.

revealed, "Relations between 'China' and 'the West' constitute a Trans-Eurasian Exchange of similar magnitude to the Columbian Exchange but of greater antiquity," with such relations dating back to possibly 1500 BCE.<sup>2</sup> Thus, new conceptualizations force us to see the Chinese cross-cultural interactive situation of Neolithic times as more complicated and nuanced than ever previously conceived.

Similar advances in our knowledge have come with respect to the notion of China's continuous demographic homogeneity. Although it should stop short of any postulations about differences attaining to the level of race, for there assuredly were none, the longstanding supposition that early Chinese—through presumed lack of variation—were oblivious to differences in physical appearance between themselves and surrounding exogenous peoples definitely deserves to be questioned. The fact that such distinctions—in the earliest times as well as now—never rose to a level that we would term *racial* does not invalidate the high likelihood that they were nonetheless made. Nor does it mean that certain human physical traits were not vastly preferred over others, whether exhibited by outlier non-affine groups or most certainly by the Chinese themselves.

What follows is a brief survey of the emergence among the Chinese people generally and the most populous ethnic Han majority in particular of a self-conception of themselves as a "white" people. As such, it begins as a study in literary excavation, and is at first confined to the indigenous Chinese context. As it unfolds, however, this chapter also exposes readers to the startling extensiveness and entrenchment over time of Chinese ideas of skin color consciousness. It is an important story to be told because, as is subsequently explicated in this volume, only with the imputation of a European scheme of racial categorization beginning in the late eighteenth century of the Common Era did the Chinese ever come to regard themselves as *yellow*.

### *Implicit Whiteness*

The most prominent, ancient and consistent fault line of difference with regard to the Chinese consciousness of skin color is assuredly what we may call that of primordial paleness and darkness. In many respects, this discovery is not only unsurprising but it may well represent what has

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<sup>2</sup> Sherratt, 2006: 31.

come to stand as a human universal. The early Chinese, like their contemporary and certainly later European counterparts, had from ancient times regarded the fairness of skin that approaches “whiteness” as typifying physical beauty, refinement, and intelligence.

However, this defining demarcation between the pale and the dark does exhibit a surprising aspect, and this is the consequential degree to which it was manifested endogenously or domestically. On the one hand, there can be no doubt that as centuries passed and as their geographical world expanded, the members of the Han ethnic majority of China were more and more inclined to posit distinctions between themselves and encountered peoples that approximate our own conventional categories of race. We can observe this trend as having been the case because of the skin color references that gradually but increasingly begin to surface in later post-unification (after 221 BCE) literature—and especially in that subgenre classified as travel or geographical [*dili*] writing. On the other hand, the degree to which the earliest Chinese skin color sensibilities were rooted inside the highly endogenous or native context of what we have come to think of as “China” is profoundly revelatory. From this discovery, we may confidently conclude that it was only later that these preexisting sensibilities got transferred or exported to other exogenous or foreign contexts.

Despite this observation, furnishing actual textual proof of an age-old endogenous Chinese preference for lightness over darkness in skin coloration is more challenging than it might first appear because of its subtlety. Incontestable as it might prove to be, the evidence is also largely implicit. Still, almost as if to countervail against their own implicitness, these earliest intimations available to us of a Chinese predilection for fairness over swarthinness in complexion do appear in the traditional classics. I have selected two of them from which to draw salient examples that I think illustrate the point exceedingly well.

The *Book of Poetry* or *Odes* or *Songs* [*Shijing*] is indisputably one of the oldest works of Chinese literature, with parts clearly dating from as early as the eleventh century BCE.<sup>3</sup> In this vaunted classic, we encounter a poem in its “Airs of the State of Wei” [*Weifeng*] section that bears the title “Peerless One” [*Shuoren*], in which the relevant lines comprising the second of its four stanzas are rendered by Arthur Waley (in his famous translation of *The Book of Songs*) as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> Schwartz, 1985: 53.

Hands white as rush down,  
 Skin like lard,  
 Neck long and white as the tree-grub,  
 Teeth like melon seeds,  
 Lovely head, beautiful brows.  
 Oh, the sweet smile dimpling,  
 The lovely eyes so black and white.<sup>4</sup>

The poem, in this part and as a whole, describes the features of a historical personage—the noblewoman Zhuang Jiang, daughter of the Lord of Qi—and it commemorates her marriage in 757 BCE to the Lord of Wei, which was putatively “the most famous wedding of Chinese antiquity.”<sup>5</sup> It clearly enunciates how early on and fully the ideal of skin whiteness had become established as the standard for Chinese feminine beauty. Moreover, we have good reason to believe this ideal to have been embraced over time by the masses as representative because, as Waley himself comments, “It is not impossible that such a song as this, though royal in origin, was afterwards sung at ordinary people’s weddings.”<sup>6</sup> However, what is most remarkable about this specific stanza of the poem in question is that nowhere does the actual Chinese term for “white”—[*bái*]—or any comparable equivalent actually appear in it. This lacuna in the form of the absence of any term directly denotable as meaning “white” is true even for the concluding line rendered by Waley as “The lovely eyes so black and white.” Instead, the ideal of whiteness is communicated forcefully but indirectly, entirely by means of implicit devices. Its effect is achieved through a reliance on a combination of mental imagery and metaphor—the proffering of images that are by nature white—that leaves the Western-language translator little alternative but to reference whiteness directly. In this regard, “Peerless One” is a marvel of literature for more reasons that are immediately apparent.

We find, however, that China’s early literature allows us to extrapolate beyond a capacity to intuit that fairness or paleness of complexion constituted the ideal merely for feminine attractiveness. Whiteness—or at least the absence of uncharacteristic darkness—of appearance seems also to have been the normative expectation for men. Although it was anonymously authored perhaps some six centuries after the *Book of Songs* at the earliest, the text *Mozi*, stemming from its identification with the

<sup>4</sup> Waley, 1937: 80.

<sup>5</sup> Waley, 1937: 80.

<sup>6</sup> Waley, 1937: 81.

obscure historical figure Mo Di (ca. 480–ca. 390 BCE), is assuredly one of the mainstays of the Chinese classical philosophical literary canon of the Warring States period (ca. 480–221 BCE).<sup>7</sup> In the singular chapter of that work bearing the title “Valuing Righteousness” [*Guīyì*], via Ian Johnston’s impressive complete translation, we encounter the narrative tale of how the great philosopher Mozi himself, when once traveling north to the great northeastern state of Qi, encountered a soothsayer, who sought to intercede on his behalf by cautioning him with the words, “The Supreme Being on this day kills the black dragon in the Northern Region so, since you, Sir, have a dark countenance, you may not go north.”<sup>8</sup>

For our purposes, at least as revealing as the soothsayer’s injunction itself is the initial portion of Mozi’s response to it, wherein he states, “People to the south can’t reach the north and people to the north can’t reach the south. In terms of complexion, there are some who are dark and some who are fair. Why is it that they all cannot proceed?”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, this highly elucidating passage from one of the handful of surviving dialogical chapters of the *Mozi* is valuable for its explicitness, for—in contrast to the preceding example culled from the *Book of Songs*—the terms used herein to denote “dark” and “fair” are to become the standard ones—[*hei*] and [*bai*].

I would be remiss not to acknowledge that how exactly to interpret the tale of Mozi’s encounter with the soothsayer has been historically controversial, with some translators electing—given its accompanying dragon imagery—to eschew a literal reading and explain it allegorically. However, if we choose to interpret this narrative with the literalness with which Johnston and other scholars have increasingly rendered it, then it clearly serves as an indicator of early Chinese consciousness of gradations of difference in native skin coloration, surely at least as it pertained in distinguishing between the very fair and the very dark. It furthermore suggests that, from remote times, a standing expectation of—if not a preference for—the former as normal. We can so surmise because, as is shown below, whereas the Chinese have indeed composed numerous historical descriptions of themselves and certainly of other peoples that concentrate on the novelty of excessively dark skin, one finds few if any instances in the literature that reference excessive whiteness. Nor should we be inclined ever to think that such discriminations in skin coloration were always trivial or mere matters of

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<sup>7</sup> Johnston, 2010: xxvi.

<sup>8</sup> Johnston, 2010: 673.

<sup>9</sup> Johnston, 2010: 673.

curiosity. To the extent that we can take the story of Mozi and the sooth-sayer as literal, these were the kinds of discriminations on which one's very life could depend.

*Whiteness by Contradistinction*

From the first of the two foregoing literary examples extracted from the classic *Book of Songs*, we can discern at the very least how prominently paleness or whiteness of skin had become established in China by the earliest times as the feminine ideal. Our recognition of this fact serves us well in transitioning from the context in which we find whiteness endogenously valued to an exogenous one wherein whiteness became used by the Chinese for the purposes of demarcating and distinguishing themselves from non-Chinese. Interestingly, the earliest extant example pivots on the legacy of another Chinese noblewoman.

The instance in question is contained in the official *History of the Jin Dynasty* [*Jinshu*], which chronicles the years 265 to 420, and it involves a certain Empress Li, the future mother of Emperor Xiao Wu (r. 373–96). Immediately upon entering the harem of the imperial palace as a concubine, the future Empress Li had become execrated by her rivals because of what they viewed as her extreme “darkness” or “blackness” [*hei*]. Li was so tormented by these other women that she was afforded fierce ministerial defenders. My own translation of Li's story from the *History of the Jin Dynasty* reveals:

When she first entered the palace as a concubine, the future Empress Li of Jin used to work in the weaving workshop. Given that she was tall in stature and her complexion was dark, the [other] concubines called her “Kunlun” [or a *kunlun*]. Alarmed by this, the ministers referred to her [instead] as “precious.”<sup>10</sup>

Amid all the subsequent traditional discourse on the Chinese preference for whiteness in complexion, the tale of Empress Li of Jin enjoys a signal status. Its singularity results from the foregoing designation of Empress Li as *Kunlun*, which is significant for two reasons. The first reason is that this brief and almost offhand anecdote about a concubine-turned-empress provides us with the earliest recorded instance in the Chinese sources of *kunlun* being used to reference a person. The second reason is

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<sup>10</sup> Fang, 1990: 32.981.

that, hereafter, and in all subsequent eras spanning the length of the pre-modern period, the Chinese would universally and indiscriminately assign *kunlun* as a way of labeling a succession of peoples that they considered non-white.

The first groups to be designated as *kunlun* by the Chinese were chiefly the various seafaring Malaya-speaking peoples immediately off China's southern coastline. However, over time, the ranks of *kunlun* grew to include other non-Sinic southern island peoples further to the east as well as, especially, to the west, with the latter being generally called in modern parlance inhabitants of "the southern portion of islands halfway between China and India" [ZhongYin bandao nanbu]. Thereby, Chinese gradually came to apply the term *kunlun* not only to encountered peoples of customary Asian stock but also eventually even to Africans. Regardless of whether it was merely an unconscious pursuit or a calculated strategy, one key function for the Chinese of this development—this categorization of an expanding array of surrounding peoples as *kunlun*—was that it affirmed their own sense of whiteness—not only for themselves, but also for the new peoples of the southern and particularly western littoral reaches with whom they were coming into increasing contact.

The Chinese would use the appellation *kunlun*—typically with the same scorn as the tormentors of Empress Li—to distinguish and, to a large degree, stigmatize these peoples newly and increasingly encountered, considering them—while perhaps not necessarily always "black" in our modern sense—still, nonetheless, substantially and self-evidently darker than they were themselves. Thus, what emerged with respect to color consciousness was doubtless a dual process of adaptive acculturation. The Chinese assigned the color-coded identity of *kunlun* to these groups, whereby the latter's blackness had the effect of reinforcing their own entrenched sense of their whiteness. In the absence of surviving written testimony to the contrary (if there ever was any to be had), we ourselves have little choice but to assume that, by "accepting" their ascribed blackness, the swelling ranks of *kunlun* could in turn hardly avoid regarding those who would so frequently become their future masters as white.

### *Whiteness Confirmed by Land and Sea*

In time, in addition to becoming denotative of what the Chinese were not, the term *kunlun* also became indicative of the relational transformation that China itself was undergoing with respect to those regarded as



the “Other.” Although it first appears in an indigenous context in connection with a *Chinese* empress, we may take the fact that *kunlun* eventually became identified exclusively with non-native peoples as evidence that Chinese horizons had assuredly begun to expand. As Andrew Sherratt astutely opines, “The experience of contacts with a wider world was an integral part of the developmental history of all societies and civilizations, as communities defined their identity by reference to a widening circle of neighbors.”<sup>11</sup> Such a resituating and reorienting of itself within a larger world setting was undoubtedly the case for the Chinese civilization, especially from the nearly three centuries of the Tang dynasty (618–907) onwards.

However, what is most crucial to this study and for our understanding is how thoroughly, from Tang times forward, Chinese and *kunlun* were increasingly drawn together in intimate contact through the convention of slavery. Several sources apprise us of the enslavement of the *kunlun* chiefly by the eminent and wealthy Tang-period families of South China but, by far, one of the most concise and yet thoroughly illuminating of these sources is a rare poem on the subject by the distinguished poet Zhang Ji (ca. 765–ca. 830). Titled simply “Kunlun Slaves” [*Kunlun’er*], the poem is preserved in the celebrated compilation *Complete Tang Poetry* [*Quan Tangshi*] and may be translated:

Home to the *kunlun* is the isles amidst the Southern Sea;  
Yet, led forth by Mân visitors, they have come to roam Han lands.  
Parrots and cockatoos must have taught them speech,  
As, riding upon billowing waves, they first entered through the Region of  
Teeming Forests.

Gold rings once dangled luridly from their ears;  
With conch-spiraled hair, long and coiling, they still refuse to bind their  
heads.  
Black as lacquer is their flesh and skin received from nature;  
Half-stripped of tree-floss garments, they stride about with bodies exposed.<sup>12</sup>

The above poem is without question a remarkable artifact, shedding light through the concision of verse as it does on so many dimensions of ethnic Han Chinese-*kunlun* relations. Through it, we learn: 1) of where the original abode of the *kunlun* was considered to be; 2) of the loose affinity in the Chinese mind between the *kunlun* and the customary Mân barbarians of the south, with the latter being often regarded as one of the age-old and

<sup>11</sup> Sherratt, 2006: 31–32.

<sup>12</sup> Peng, 1961: 6.6.4.9.

perennial enemies of the ethnic Han majority; 3) that included at least initially among the features of *kunlun* alterity was the classic unintelligibility of their speech, which to Chinese ears purportedly resembled the cacophonous chirping and twittering of birds; and 4) that, at least to Zhang Ji's knowledge, the primary port of access for the original entry of the *kunlun* into China had been Yulinzhou, a district in what is today southeastern Guangxi province, across the Qiongzhou Strait to the northeast of Hainan Island. Nevertheless, what is conveyed to us most saliently of all through the poem "Kunlun Slaves" is the palpable and conspicuous sense of the Chinese consciousness of profound differences between themselves and the *kunlun* in terms of their bodies. Even if we choose to judge it purely in relative terms, none of these differences looms more starkly or immutably than their blackness of skin color.

Over the course of the Tang era, the geography that had first and foremost made the *kunlun* into inhabitants of the seaward south, largely because the elusive "land of Kunlun" [Kunlunguo] was supposedly located there, began to expand, thus incorporating more far-flung and disparate peoples.<sup>13</sup> These peoples—ranging from Malays to Javanese but also including Thais, Khmers, and various aboriginal groups such as those of Borneo—were subjugated and routinely enslaved by the newly arriving Chinese occupants of the areas of Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Guizhou. As the late sinologist Edward Schafer described the situation by as early as the seventh and eighth centuries, "Slave traders preyed upon these unfortunate 'barbarians' without mercy, while edict after edict issued from the throne decrying this evil and forbidding it, apparently with little success."<sup>14</sup> We hardly need to doubt that the Chinese believed the blackness of these "barbarians" to be that quality of their "otherness" that played a singular role in preconditioning them for enslavement. As the *Old History of the Tang Dynasty* [*Jiu Tangshu*] succinctly records: "From Champa [present-day eastern coastal Vietnam] on southward, the curly-haired and the black-bodied are comprehensively called *kunlun*."<sup>15</sup>

Still, from a Chinese perspective, *kunlun*, whose most prominent trait shared in common was blackness of skin, might hail from any direction. Many of the blacks eventually mentioned in the historical record were dispatched as chattel to China from landlocked regions of the distant west. We learn from the official *History of the Song Dynasty* [*Songshi*], for

<sup>13</sup> Wyatt, 2010: 32–40.

<sup>14</sup> Schafer, 1963: 45.

<sup>15</sup> Liu, 1976: 197.5270.

example, of the presumably western provenance of the *kunlun* attached to an Arab delegation to the Chinese imperial court that arrived from Persia or modern-day Iran:

In 977, Envoy Pusina, Vice Commissioner Mohemo [Muhammad], and Administrative Assistant Puluo and others made an offering of tribute [to the court] of the goods of their locality. Their servants had deep-set eyes and black bodies. They were called *kunlun* slaves. By imperial decree, in return, these envoys were given suits of garments with lining, utensils, and currency; their servants were given variegated silk fabric with defects.<sup>16</sup>

From their foregoing description, it is clear that these particular *kunlun* hailed originally from somewhere in the remote west and, beyond their fleeting interest to the Chinese as living and breathing curiosities, they were hardly to be counted as amounting to much more in intrinsic value than any of the separate “local goods” that the distant emissaries, upon returning with these slaves to their homeland, elected to leave behind in China as tribute. As *kunlun*, these servants—in Chinese eyes—were, after all, to use Schafer’s apt qualification, “not quite human, in the best sense of the word.”<sup>17</sup>

However, in the interests of the fairest and most complete interpretation, we benefit immeasurably from the introduction at this crucial stage of, essentially, a note of cautionary balance. Chinese skin color awareness was not achieved solely by contradistinction—that is, by exclusively accentuating the difference between themselves and others. The relative absence of blackness in their physical makeup was not the only means through which the Chinese remained self-affirmed in their regard for themselves as a white people. Just as a heightened exposure to those with whom they differed in skin color reinforced their self-perceptions, so did the increasing encounters of the Chinese with peoples who, although also deemed barbarous, were perceived as proximate, similar, or identical in complexion. Indeed, the far more common, if not altogether dominating, impression that the Chinese gleaned from the earliest confirmed interactions with peoples reachable overland to the far west was one of their mutually shared whiteness.

The case of the Chinese writer and traveler Du Huan (fl. 750–762) of the Tang dynasty illustrates this dynamic of whiteness as a reaffirming baseline exceedingly well. In 751, Du Huan was captured by Abbasidian Arabs at the Battle of Talas (named after the river Talas in modern-day Kyrgyzstan)—an engagement that was nothing less than militarily disastrous for the

<sup>16</sup> Tuotuo, 1977: 490.14118.

<sup>17</sup> Schafer, 1963: 44.

Chinese. Thus, as a prisoner of war and over the course of eleven years, Du Huan became an itinerant captive in various Arab states including Fulin or Daqin, which is generally thought today to be the modern territory of Syria. In the few preciously informative fragments we possess today of his no longer extant *Record of Frontier Travels* [*Jingxing ji*], he describes the natives as “ruddy and fair-complexioned” [*yanse hongbai*].<sup>18</sup> Writing almost five centuries later in his *Description of Foreign Peoples* [*Zhufan zhi*], nominally about the same locale but which for him signified Baghdad, the maritime customs official Zhao Rugua (1170–1231) stated of the population that “These people grow to be tall and handsomely fair [*zhangda meixi*], and are to be classed somewhat with those of China, and for this reason their land is called Daqin.”<sup>19</sup> Nearly four centuries after Zhao Rugua, the distinguished man of letters Gu Qiyuan (1565–1628) informs us with terse bluntness in his *Outlines of Explanation* [*Shuolue*] that:

If in our researches we follow what is provided us by Du Huan’s *Record of Frontier Travels*, then Syria [Fulin] is located to the west of the country of Shan [Damascus] (Shanguo). Another name for this place is Liqian. The features of its people are white [*yanse bai*].<sup>20</sup>

It is worth noting that neither Zhao Rugua nor Gu Qiyuan, the last two of our commentators on Syria, could draw upon any firsthand knowledge as Du Huan himself had been able to do. Nevertheless, the litany of hazily informed opinions did not stop here. Writing earlier and thus with no more direct evidence than either Zhao or Gu had enjoyed, the tenth-century compilers of the *Old History of the Tang Dynasty* had determined that “whereas the men and boys of the Arabian peninsula [Dashi] resemble those of the western coast of India [Puluomo; also Poluomen] in being dark [*hei*], hairy, and big-nosed, their women are pure white [*baixi*] and have the ability to write.”<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, lest a misimpression become fostered, Chinese recognition of this quality of paleness, fairness, or whiteness was by no means restricted to the relatively new barbarians that the Chinese were increasingly encountering to the overland west. We find that it was also occasionally discernible even among the more familiar barbarians within the traditional Sinic zone, such as the Japanese. Of this people, with whom the Chinese had already interacted for purposes of trade and tribute for centuries, the traveler-writer Wang Dayuan (fl. 1340s) of the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) recorded

<sup>18</sup> Hirth and Rockhill, 1966 [1911]: 104.

<sup>19</sup> Zhao, 1969: 1.19b; Hirth and Rockhill, 1966 [1911]: 103.

<sup>20</sup> Gu, 1983: 3.4.

<sup>21</sup> Liu, 1976: 198.5315.

in his important *Annals of Island Barbarians* [*Daoyi zhilue*] the simple but curious observation that “there are some who are white” [*you baizhe*].<sup>22</sup>

This snippet of a description that Wang Dayuan affords us of the Japanese, purveys on the one hand the same information as the more elaborate Syrian portrait offered by Du Huan—namely, a recognition of a particular people as being as pale or fair or white—but certainly no more—than the Chinese considered themselves to be. However, on the other hand, whereas we can be certain that Du Huan traveled to the locales he describes, the prospect that Wang Dayuan ever passed very close to Japan in his travels seems unlikely. Furthermore, in Wang Dayuan’s acknowledgment of the whiteness of at least some Japanese, unlike Du Huan’s remarks on the fairness of the Syrians, we can also detect something of a corrective tone. One cannot avoid suspecting that if he is so compelled to communicate such obvious information at such a late stage in Sino-Japanese contact as his own times, then Wang Dayuan must be emending some longstanding popular misconception. If not from direct empirical observation, then from which source might such a misconception—that of uniform Japanese non-whiteness—have arisen?

In all probability, the source in question is the *Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine* [*Huangdi neijing*]<sup>23</sup>—a work that by Yuan times was already at least fifteen centuries old and the repository for theories on medicine and other subjects that are even older. According to eminent historian of Chinese traditional science and medicine Nathan Sivin,<sup>23</sup> its “plain” or “basic questions” [*suwen*] portions probably date to the first century BCE, and in them we find a salient explanatory linkage established between diet and disease for the first time, which we might well expect in this ancient medical treatise, but also between darkness or blackness of skin and directionality, which frankly comes as somewhat of a surprise. There are two distinct passages in the *Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine* that enunciate this dietary, geo-correlative correspondence with swarthinness or blackness of skin. The first is:

The people of the East live near the ocean and eat much fish and salt. Fish and seafood are thought to cause an “internal burning,” salt to injure the blood. These factors cause a dark complexion and a propensity towards ulcers, which must be treated with acupuncture by means of the needle of flint.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Wang, 1975: 1.1b.

<sup>23</sup> Sivin, 1995: 5.

<sup>24</sup> Veith, 2002: 56; Unschuld, 2003: 136, 266, 290, 299–300.

And the second is:

Beginning and creation come from the East. Fish and salt are the products of water and ocean and of the shores near the water. The people of the regions of the East eat fish and crave salt; their living is tranquil and their food delicious. Fish causes people to burn within (thirst), and the eating of salt injures (defeats) the blood. Therefore the people of these regions are all of dark complexion and careless and lax in their principles.<sup>25</sup>

The kind of correlative reasoning exhibited above may of course seem quaint and even primitive to us, but there is no denying its cogency within its own traditionalist context. Wang Dayuan, like the elites of many generations before and after him, was doubtless familiar with these passages and their espoused theories. What seems quite conceivable is that Wang Dayuan had been forced to modify some earlier held view—one that perhaps asserted the unqualified blackness of “the people of the East,” among whom the Japanese were to be included. Whether this adjustment on Wang’s part had resulted from his exposure to the more accurate and thereby corrective firsthand reports of others or from some other factor, we are not likely ever to know. However, if they indicate nothing else, then these passages extracted from the *Yellow Emperor’s Classic* most assuredly underscore the longevity with which the Chinese have maintained an acute consciousness and operative awareness of the variations in skin coloration obtaining not only among themselves but also the foreign peoples of their incrementally enlarging world.

### *Explicit Whiteness*

Scholars of Chinese maritime relations concur that as early as the 400s of the Common Era, China had already entered into thriving mercantile intercourse with its Southeast Asian neighbor states. As historian Derek Heng observes, it was during these years that, “the names of maritime Southeast Asian polities had begun to appear in Chinese official records.”<sup>26</sup> By about the beginning of the tenth century, these commercial activities conducted between the Chinese and their southerly neighbors underwent a dramatic expansion, spurred on largely by the establishment of ever-firmer and more regularized tribute exchanges with these countries of

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<sup>25</sup> Veith, 2002: 147; Unschuld, 2003: 136, 266, 290, 299–300.

<sup>26</sup> Heng, 2009: 23.

what we today refer to as the South China Sea. However, knowledge of their local produce and commodities was not the only information that the Chinese extracted from these seafaring exchanges with the natives of such countries as Srivijaya (part of Sumatra) and Heling (part of central Java). Also understandably gleaned was knowledge of the inhabitants of these places, to which the Chinese were first and foremost exposed to through the appearances of these natives. The Chinese commented frequently on the features of the increasing numbers of peoples to the south they were newly encountering; indeed, such a physical description—no matter how terse—seems to have constituted one of the first requisite elements of any report. Unsurprisingly, in virtually every case, the Chinese appear to have found the natives of these Southern Sea [Nanhai or Nanyang] localities, even when not called black [*hei*] outright to always be darker than themselves.

We find this same pattern—one by which the Chinese marked their own distinctiveness as white through the ascription of darkness or blackness to others—perpetuated repeatedly over subsequent centuries. Taken as such, this phenomenon itself marks an emerging explicitness in the still evolving Chinese discourse on the awareness of skin coloration. However, explicit it may well now have become, this new turn in consciousness was also progressively accompanied by certain unprecedented elements of sophistication. Perhaps the earliest example on which we can draw that reveals these new, more subtly discerning elements conclusively is that of Zhou Daguan (ca. 1270–ca. 1350) in Cambodia [Zhenla].

Aside from his birthplace—the city of Wenzhou (south of present-day Shanghai)—and the fact that he was part of an official delegation dispatched by the Mongol emperor Temür Öljeitü Qan or Chengzong (r. 1294–1307), grandson of the great Kublai Khan, to Yasodharapura (in the central state of Angkor), capital of Cambodia, in 1296. We are told that the delegation of which Zhou Daguan was a member was sent to “deliver an edict,” presumably announcing the ascension to the Chinese throne of Temür and his demands for recognition and submission from Cambodia and neighboring Champa.<sup>27</sup>

Zhou Daguan’s delegation remained in Cambodia for eleven months—from late 1296 to early 1297.<sup>28</sup> Upon returning to China, Zhou recorded his experiences of having lived among the Khmer people in a work titled *Record of the Land and Customs of Cambodia* [Zhenla fengtu ji]. We

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<sup>27</sup> Zhou, 2007: 11, 46.

<sup>28</sup> Zhou, 2007: vii.



today possibly possess something less than half of what he originally wrote. Nevertheless, with respect to the present subject of the kinds of distinctions based on gradations in skin coloration that we can assume were typical for Chinese during his age to have habitually made, Zhou Daguan's observations on the Cambodian populace are immediately informative, for he tells us straightaway in the chapter describing the people in and around the capital region that:

The one thing people know about southern barbarians is that they are coarse, ugly, and very black. I know nothing at all about those living on islands in the sea or in remote villages, but this is certainly true of those in the ordinary localities. When it comes to the women of the palace and women from the *nanpeng*—that is, the great houses—there are many who are as white as jade, but that is because they do not see the light of the sun.<sup>29</sup>

In the extant version of his record available to us, Zhou Daguan offers no further references to the skin color of the Cambodians. However, from his concluding remark on the women of the palace and the elite households, beyond the implicit premium placed on whiteness as opposed to blackness of skin in the abstract, we learn that Zhou regarded the coloration of the Angkorians as less innate than it was circumstantial. Although he may well have considered the swarthy complexions of some of the “southern barbarians” he references to have been natural and immutable, Zhou nonetheless does not make this condition necessarily the standard for the Cambodians, the darkness of most of whom he categorizes as a form of discoloration, a severe darkening of the skin owing to continual overexposure to the sun. With this qualification in mind, an alternative translation actually preferred by some authors for the “very black” cited in the first line of the foregoing passage is indeed “deeply sunburnt.”<sup>30</sup>

Another reality that Zhou Daguan addresses is the prominence of the Chinese presence in Cambodia. Having begun as early as the Tang, Chinese mercantile expansionism itself had so greatly expanded by Yuan times as to have resulted in large numbers of Chinese having established themselves abroad throughout the Sinic sphere of influence. From his vantage point at the close of the thirteenth century, Zhou Daguan viewed the ensconcing of his countrymen in and around Cambodia's Angkor state, effectively as expatriate profiteers, with no surprise. Zhou offers no estimates on the size of the Chinese presence at Angkor, which suggests

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<sup>29</sup> Zhou, 2007: vii.

<sup>30</sup> Osborne, 2000: 31.

that it was substantial enough such that encountering Chinese was commonplace. He does observe, however, that those “local people who know how to trade are all women”<sup>31</sup> and explicitly states that, because of their dominance in matters of trade, when any Chinese “goes to this country, the first thing he must do is take in a woman, partly with a view to profiting from her trading abilities.”<sup>32</sup>

Through his observations, Zhou Daguan, in an unwitting but still anticipatory way, apprises us of what will become yet another key element in the evolving sophistication of the Chinese consciousness of skin coloration in premodern times. This element, which was to emerge with expressed clarity during the subsequent era of the first two centuries of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), consisted of the idea that whatever fairness or whiteness in complexion was to be found exhibited among the customary “southern barbarians” must be attributed to their having interbred with the Chinese. We can intuit that such a belief had become widely held by its expression of the literature of the period. A well known example comes from the writing brush of the traveler Fei Xin (1388–1436?) who accompanied the famed eunuch commander Zheng He (1371–1435) on four of his seven unprecedentedly extensive naval expeditions undertaken during the first third of the fifteenth century. When commenting on the natives of the nearby South China Sea island state of Melaka (formerly, Malacca; in Chinese, Manlajia), Fei Xin offers the candid assessment—based on his firsthand exposure—that “the flesh of their bodies is lacquer-black, though there are those among them who, being descended from the Chinese stock of Tang times, are white.”<sup>33</sup>

There is, to be sure, a presumptively hegemonic dimension to such a declaration as Fei Xin’s. However, his pronouncement that the Chinese were the only conferrers of whiteness among the constellation of peoples bounded by Sinic influence is indicative of much more than hegemonism. Fei Xin’s words exemplify the extent to which the age-old self-image of the Chinese as a white people had become consolidated, entrenched, and broadly accepted—to the point of becoming, at least from their perspective, universalized and even taken for granted.

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<sup>31</sup> Osborne, 2000: 31.

<sup>32</sup> Zhou, 2007: 23, 70.

<sup>33</sup> Fei, 1999: 2.1b; Fei, 1996: 54.

*Whiteness First Assumed, Then Contested*

Therefore, when we arrive at the period corresponding to Europe's late medieval times we find that the self-certainty of the Chinese about their identity as a fair or pale or white people had already enjoyed many centuries—conceivably, even a few millennia—of development and entrenchment. The sources of this conviction on the part of the Chinese had clear and traceable domestic origins, and required neither inspiration nor stimulation from without. However, it was largely through an expanding array of seaward contacts, especially during the middle imperial period—roughly from the seventh through the fifteenth centuries—especially with neighboring peoples to the south and west but also to the east—that the Chinese conspicuously came to identify themselves as white.

By contrast, we know that it was a momentous occasion of first contact in another part of Asia than China that preconditioned the first seaborne European explorers for the idea of Chinese whiteness. As the late great comparativist historian Donald F. Lach was to phrase the early sixteenth-century milieu, “Portuguese pioneers in India heard vague rumors of ‘white visitors’ who had appeared on the Malabar Coast at irregular intervals some eighty years before.”<sup>34</sup> These forays into India by the Chinese were several decades in advance of those made by the Portuguese and they were the same ones of which Fei Xin (just mentioned above) was a part. However, the Portuguese “East Indiamen” doubtless became apprised of the Chinese by other means than these Malabar Coast reports about former visitors from the east. Evidence suggests that knowledge of the Chinese admiral Zheng He’s exploits in the fifteenth century became surprisingly widespread in Portugal itself during the sixteenth century.<sup>35</sup>

From the perspective of their Indian witnesses, these Chinese visitations—stimulated by the desire to project prestige as well as engage in trade—were memorable enough but, having ceased, they became—with the passage of time—superficial. Nevertheless, in the grand scheme of things, the reports of the reputed encounters, vague though they might have been, did have the effect of influencing the successive waves of Portuguese merchants and Catholic missionaries by preparing them for the type of people they could eventually expect to see at the eastern extremes of their travels—a breed that they also initially described and accepted as

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<sup>34</sup> Lach, 1968: 730.

<sup>35</sup> Santos, 2005: 40.

white. The Jesuit papal visitor Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), writing in a 1577 report, proclaimed—indeed, prophesied—that the prospects for missionary success in Japan and China were great not only because these two lands were comparable to Europe in terms of level of culture but also because their populations shared the distinction in common with those in Europe of being “white” [*bianca*].<sup>36</sup>

However, we also know that this interlude at the outset in which Europeans were able and willing to regard the Chinese Other with the same eyes as they regarded themselves was not to last very long. Moreover, there was soon to be a close correlation between European disenchantment with the Chinese as a people and a concomitant degradation in their perceived physiognomy. Even before Valignano was to record his sanguine pronouncement about the potential for conversion among the Japanese and the Chinese, the Spanish Augustinian friar Martín de Rada (1533–78) dispensed with all delicacy in describing the people he declared following his brief 1575 sojourn in China’s southern port of Xiamen (formerly Amoy, in Fujian): “The people of Taybin [a corruption of Amoy vernacular for ‘Da Ming’ or ‘the Great Ming’] are all, on the one hand, white and well-built, and when they are small children they are very fair, but when they grow up they become ugly.”<sup>37</sup>

We cannot know whether Martín de Rada, in describing this loss of fairness in maturity, really meant that the Chinese somehow depart from their pristine whiteness as they grow older. The missionary elaborated no further on the subject. However, we can be unambiguously certain that with the heightened exposure to one another that ensued over the course of successive centuries, the Chinese became transmogrified in European eyes, and one irreducibly prominent parameter of this transmogrification was constituted by the factor of skin color. As the centuries progressed, from the European standpoint, whether consciously or unconsciously, the Chinese became—at the very least—bereft of their original whiteness.<sup>38</sup> At the greatest extreme, they were denied having ever possessed any original whiteness altogether. The ramifications of this transition would be manifold. To a considerable extent, they have resulted in a legacy of mistrustfulness and resentment that remains with us to this very day.

<sup>36</sup> Mungello, 2009: 132; Spence, 1984: 42; Moran, 1993: 51.

<sup>37</sup> Boxer, 1953: 282.

<sup>38</sup> For an overview of this transformation see Demel, 1992a.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### RACIAL DISCOURSE AND UTOPIAN VISIONS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY CHINA

Sufen Sophia Lai

Like most human expressions, race matters are complicated by human predispositions. Any interpretative endeavor involving aspects of race needs to be located in social, cultural and historical circumstances. The human tendency is that each society locates itself at the center and views strangers as cultural others. The projection of cultural others usually reveals more about the projecting center than about the peripheral others. China was no different from most other ancient civilizations in this matter of “we” and “others.” Like the Greeks, China began its binary differentiation of inside and outside as parallel to civilized and barbaric very early in Chinese historiography. After the 1840s, appraising and reshaping China’s traditional civilized-barbaric discourse became one of the late-Qing reformers’ main concerns. In the 1870s, Wang Tao (1828–1897), a reform-minded scholar and journalist who assisted Scottish sinologist James Legge (1815–1897) in his translation of the Confucian Classics, called this binary discourse tradition *hua-yi bian* [differentiation of *hua* and *yi*] in a treatise of the same title. Wang points out the fluidity of *hua-yi* boundaries in the past and the fallacy of his contemporaries for having an essentialist view of the outsiders:

Traditionally, a differentiation exists between inside—*hua* and outside—*yi*. Therefore, the Middle Kingdom is referred to as *hua*, and everything outside this center as *yi*. Still, this is nothing but an absurd allegation. . . . According to the norms of the *Chunqiu*, only those [who share the manners of barbarians] are regarded as *yi*. If they link up with China and follow the Chinese *li* [ethics and rituals], they are regarded as Chinese . . . the *Chunqiu* even refers to the civilized Wu and Chu areas as *yi*. The differentiation between *hua* and *yi* is not a question of some geographical inside or outside location; rather, it depends on the *li*. Having *li*, the *yi* become *hua*; not having *li*, the *hua* can also turn into *yi*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wang, 1883: 364.

Wang Tao's treatise on *hua-yi* discourse reflects one of the various types of cultural re-evaluation undertaken by Chinese literati in the nineteenth century, when China began to face severe social, economic, and political crises. Challenged by constant foreign aggressions and multiple regional rebellions, Qing Empire in the nineteenth century could no longer resist the call for reform. This chapter examines the transformation of *hua-yi* discourse and the rise of racial discourse in nineteenth century China through the lens of the Qing literati's utopian longings and utopian statecraft. The evolution of *hua-yi* binary in the nineteenth century and its transition into modern racial discourse at the turn of the twentieth century reflect a China that was looking inward for change and seeking outward for clarification and categorization.

### *Types of Hua-Yi Discourse before the Qing Dynasty*

Lydia Liu's observation concerning *yi* in *The Clash of Empires* provides us with a foreground for the complexity of *hua-yi* discourse:

Countless events and fantastic happenings have come to pass over the last two centuries, but none could rival the singularity of the Chinese word *yi* in its uncanny ability to arouse confusion, anxiety and war. *Yi* is one of those monstrous creatures one must reckon with, subdue, destroy, or exile before it comes back to haunt us. What is the meaning of this all powerful and dangerous word—"barbarian," "stranger," "foreigner," or "non-Chinese"?<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, throughout Chinese history, the boundaries and definitions for *yi* have been fluid and disputed. The *hua-yi* discourse reflects China's interaction with its peripheral groups. The lines of demarcation between *hua* and *yi* were porous and often shifting. Surveying the stance of *hua-yi* discourse, we see China swing back and forth between Confucian humanism with inclusive attitudes towards non-*hua* others, and xenophobic, cultural chauvinism. The voices of *hua-yi* discourse are diverse and often reflect China's socio-political conditions. We may divide these voices in the pre-Qing era into three categories. The first is a *laissez-faire* paradigm based on Confucian ideals—when a king rules with virtue and true mandate, "the *yi* tribes all around [*siyi*] will [of their own accord] come to submit to the king [*lai wang*]," as laid out in the "*Dayu mo*" [Counsels of Great Yu]

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<sup>2</sup> Liu, 2004: 31.

within the *Shangshu* [*The Classic of Documents*].<sup>3</sup> The second is the “honor the king and subdue the *yi*” [*zun-wang rang-yi*] discourse. It emphasizes the legitimacy of the sovereign and the urgency of *hua*’s supremacy. This paradigm was especially advocated during the unstable era of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, as the old political order collapsed and Xia [China] was rife with feudal states fighting for hegemony. The third is the “use *xia* [Chinese] to transform *yi*” [*yong-xia bian-yi*] paradigm, as asserted by Mencius—he had heard of using Xia ways to change the barbarians, but not vice versa.<sup>4</sup>

The *si yi* [four *yi*] were later ethnographically described and classified according to the four cardinal directions in the “Royal Regulations” [*Wang zhi*] chapter of the *Liji* [*Book of Rites*] during the Han dynasty.<sup>5</sup> The “Royal Regulations” presented four fundamental Confucian views of China’s peripheral others: (1) geography conditioned “bodily capacities,” not mental or intellectual capacities; (2) tattoos, hair, clothing and food are signs of demarcation; (3) cultural diversity and preferences are natural; and (4) communication with other cultural groups can be achieved through translation. Given this classical view, how do Chinese draw the line between *hua* and *yi*? It is possible to see different stances taken by Chinese literati regarding the line of demarcation. Han Yu (768–825), a Confucian stalwart of the *fugu* [return to antiquity] movement in the Tang dynasty for example, in his *Yuandao* [*Original Dao*] and other anti-Buddhist treatises, staunchly advocated that China defend the line between the Central Kingdom and the *yi* by resisting and eradicating foreign influences, particularly Buddhism.<sup>6</sup> He contended that Confucius’ *Chunqiu* was composed to safeguard this demarcation. A generation later, Chen An (ca. 860), in a treatise entitled *Hua xin* [Chinese Mind/Heart], gives his definition of what he considered to be Chinese Mind/Heart:

Based on *di* [land and geography], there is boundary between *hua* and *yi*. Based on *jiao* [culture and education], is there still a boundary between *hua* and *yi*? Indeed, the differentiation between *hua* and *yi* depends on *xin* [mind or heart]. Discerning one’s *xin* relies on observing one’s inclination. There are those born in the Middle Continent [*jiuzhou*], whose conduct violates *li* [rites or propriety] and *yi* 義 [righteousness]. This is *hua* in form but *yi* 夷 [barbarian] in mind/heart. [There are] those born in the *yi* [barbarian]

<sup>3</sup> Jian and Qian, 2001: 39–42.

<sup>4</sup> Shi, 1984: 126–130.

<sup>5</sup> Wang, 1984: 230–235.

<sup>6</sup> Quantangwen, 0558.



region, but who behave according to *li* and *yi* 義 [righteousness]. This is *yi* 夷 in form but *hua* in mind/heart.<sup>7</sup>

Chen An's view of the Chinese mind/heart is an example of an alternative discourse in Tang China's multicultural and cosmopolitan world, one in which China was both exporting and importing culture to and from her peripheral regions. Chen An's definition of what constitutes Chinese mind/heart reflects a cultural chauvinism, but not a racial chauvinism. Similar alternative discourses existed throughout Chinese history. Opposing categories of *hua-yi* discourse challenged each other contemporaneously within the same socio-political environment. It is fair to say that the Chinese literati's voices with regard to *hua-yi* differentiation were not homogeneous. Exclusive types of *hua-yi* discourse might dominate during periods in which China's socio-political conditions were threatened, while other types of discourse could run parallel to them. Later in this chapter, we will return to examine the volatility of *hua-yi* discourse during the Qing dynasty, when the boundaries of the *hua-yi* divide were challenged from both the inside and the outside. Consequently, the Chinese literati's diverse views of *hua-yi* undertook a different transformation.

### *Chinese Literati's Utopian Visions before the Nineteenth Century*

In her study of the definitions of utopia and of the approaches of utopian studies, Ruth Levitas points out that "both the range of material and the approach to utopia vary a great deal among the commentators," and that the definitions of utopia and what constitutes a utopian text have been quite murky and fleeting.<sup>8</sup> She believed that "the difficulties have to do with the boundaries between literature and politics, between utopia and religion, and with differences of content and intent within the literary genres, and thus the possible distinctions between utopia, dystopia, anti-utopia and satire."<sup>9</sup> Whatever the debate, as Levitas puts it, utopia simply is "about how we would live and what kind of a world we would live in if we could do just that."<sup>10</sup> The utopian models envisioned by the Chinese literati for answering these fundamental existential questions may be grouped according to two impulses: one is an inward-bound

<sup>7</sup> *Quantangwen*, 0706.

<sup>8</sup> Levitas, 1990: 31.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*: 31–32.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*: 1.

path oriented with worldly ethics, statecraft, and active cultivation. The other is an outward-bound flight seeking other-worldly lands of recluses, immortals, or spiritual salvation. The former is rooted in the Confucian ideal of cultivating a morally perfect and harmonious society in a world of *taiping* [universal peace]. The second is the complimentary Daoist aspiration for individual freedom through transcending the mundane world. The first type of utopian vision is mostly found in Confucian scholars' socio-political and philosophical treatises.

Through a synthesis of various socio-political philosophies of the Warring States era, primarily Confucianism and Mohism, this inward-bound, worldly utopia is canonized in the "Acts of Ritual" [*Liyun*] chapter of the *Liji* [Book of Rites], in which a perfect, harmonious One-World (a term used by Laurence G. Thompson) of "Grand Union" [*datong*] was envisioned. This "One-World" of "Grand Union" would become a central theme in the development of Confucian thought, and was further explicated and underscored in the *Daxue* [The Great Learning] and *Zhongyong* [The Middle Way] by Confucian scholars such as Han Yu (768–824) during the Tang Dynasty and Zhu Xi (1130–1200) during the Song Dynasty in terms of a moral path which the individual follows by first, *xiushen* [cultivating oneself], then *qijia* [regulating one's family] and *zhiguo* [governing one's state], and finally *ping tianxia* [bringing tranquility and harmony to all under the heaven].

As a complementary vision to the Confucian utopia, the outward-bound, other-worldly Daoist utopias are expressed in various literary genres and artistic forms. In poetry, there are the "Far-off Journey" of *Chuci* and the "Wandering among the Immortals" poems depicting the poets' yearning for the mythical lands of the immortals as a representation of an ideal existence that transcends the imperfect world. In mythical texts, a place called *Xuanpu* ["Hanging Garden" or "Mysterious Garden"] or *Pingpu* [Garden of Peace], situated in the mythical Kunlun Mountain is depicted as a garden paradise. There are also three sacred island mountains of immortals—Penglai, Fangzhang, and Yinhzhou—off the eastern coast. In the *Shiji*, Grand Historian Sima Qian records that Emperor Qin (259–210 BCE) sent thousands of virgin boys and girls to the eastern sea in order to seek out the immortals. Both of these mythical traditions would have a profound impact on Chinese garden design and on the Chinese literati's relation with their private gardens—both real and imaginary. After the Six Dynasties, and under the influence of Tao Qian's (365–427) "Peach Blossom Spring" and *tianyuan* [field and garden] poetry, the garden and the lands of the Daoist immortals became the Chinese literati's staple

metaphors for utopian existence. The 'literati gardens' became a place where scholars found peace and freedom for their bodies and spirits, and where they could roam freely and easily within an ideal space.<sup>11</sup>

Li Bai's (701–762) poem "Spring Night, Banqueting with my Cousins in the Peach Blossom Garden: A Preface" brilliantly captured the literati's utopian sentiments in the garden. That is to say, life is short and unpredictable. Therefore, one should seize the day and enjoy it while one can. The ultimate joy is to gather in the garden with brothers and fellow poets to enjoy a banquet, drink wine and write poetry. Life cannot get better than this, and time seems to hold still in this temporary utopia. For the literati, the garden is now a haven for contemplating life's fleetingness. It provides a temporary escape for transcending a mundane life. In this literati tradition, the garden is very much a male domain, where male poets and artists gather to find their creative outlets and utopian escape. Other than as singing and dancing girls, women have no presence or voice in these poetic gatherings and utopian seeking. Women's association with the garden in the Chinese literary tradition was mostly found in the romances of scholar-beauty fiction and dramas, the most famous being *Romance of the West Chamber* by Wang Shifu (ca. 1260–1336) and *The Peony Pavilion* by Tang Xianzu (1550–1616). In these plays, the garden serves as a dream-like landscape where the scholar and the beauty have their secret rendezvous and fulfill their love. For women, the garden and garden gatherings do not carry the same literary significance or utopian longing. Race matters or *hua-yi* discourse are not part of the utopian garden tradition either.

The literary representation of the utopian garden marks a major departure in mid-Qing novels. Cao Xueqin (1724?–1764) and Li Ruzhen (ca. 1763–1830) both re-conceptualized the garden symbolism and produced monumental novels depicting feminized gardens as their illusive utopias. In Cao's *The Story of the Stone* (or *Dream of the Red Chamber*), the protagonist, Jia Baoyu, is the only male allowed to reside with his coterie of sisters, female cousins and maidservants in the utopian *Daguan Yuan* [Grand View Garden]. These young women form a poetry club and have poetry contests as if they were typical male literati in their garden enjoying their utopian pursuits. In this female domain, Baoyu was free to be himself without fearing his father's authority. Having Grand View Garden

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<sup>11</sup> For the development of Chinese 'literati gardens' see Keswick, 2003: 85–101; and, for the garden theme in literati culture and in Chinese novels see "*The Chinese Garden as Lyric Enclave*" (Xiao, 2001: 61–189).

as his utopian escape, as Maram Epstein observes in *Competing Discourses*, Baoyu “exemplifies the conventions of literati ‘authenticity’ by not allowing his unique eccentricity to be restrained by orthodox expectations.”<sup>12</sup> Yu Yingshi, in *Honglou meng de liangge shijie* [The two worlds of *Honglou meng*], suggests that Cao creates two contrasting worlds in the novel: the utopian world and the real world as parallels to the inside and outside of Grand View Garden.<sup>13</sup> This contrast “serves as a moral allegory based on the pure utopia of the garden and the polluting forces outside its walls.”<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the most innovative aspect of Cao Xueqin’s Grand View Garden is the feminization of the literati garden.

*Racial Discourse and Utopian Visions in Jinghua yuan*

Li Ruzhen’s literary utopian garden in *Jinghua yuan* [*Flowers in the Mirror*] is both a tribute to Cao Xueqin’s feminized Grand View Garden and to the literati garden culture of his time.<sup>15</sup> However, Li’s images of the utopian garden take one step further, as he includes issues of racial and cultural others in his construction of the utopian world. Completed around 1820 and frequently compared to Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Jinghua yuan* is a novel of fantasy and erudition that satirizes the socio-political climate and mirrors the literati ethos of the early nineteenth century. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on issues of cultural chauvinism and racial affairs. In the first half of *Jinghua yuan*, the protagonist, Tang Ao, a Confucian scholar frustrated by the bureaucratic grand examination system, travels through strange lands similar to the mythological lands recorded in the *Classics of Mountains and Seas* and eventually finds his Daoist island of the immortals. The second half of the novel reads more like an encyclopedia than a novel, while also serves as a tribute to Cao Xueqin’s Grand View Garden. However, unlike Grand View Garden, whose central hero is still the male protagonist, Li Ruzhen’s garden is solely occupied by female talents. Longing, romantic dreams, and a beauty’s sorrow, typical sentiments associated with women in the garden are all absent in Li’s imaginary garden. Instead, the author indulges himself with 25 chapters of

<sup>12</sup> Epstein, 2001: 156.

<sup>13</sup> Yu, 2002: 36.

<sup>14</sup> Epstein, 2001: 150.

<sup>15</sup> For the sources of Li Ruzhen’s inspirations for *Jinghua yuan*, see works such as Widmer, 2005, 2006. See also Wang, Q., 1997 and Hsia, 2004.

garden banquets, in which the 100 female-scholars, serving as Li's mouth-pieces, make merry like traditional male literati in the Golden Valley Garden and Orchid Pavilion.<sup>16</sup> Rather than an outward quest for the utopian island of immortals, Li presents us with the female scholars' strolls in the garden, moving from one pavilion or courtyard to another, and taking on one type of literati leisure activity after another. As scholars, such as Lu Xun and C.T. Hsia have pointed out, Li Ruzhen is primarily interested in showing off his erudition rather than pushing forward the development of the story.<sup>17</sup> The outward quest in the first half of the novel is now replaced by an inner intellectual journey in the garden as a female utopia.

Another innovation of Li Ruzhen's feminized utopian garden is Li Ruzhen's employment of his characters as mirrors for satirizing China's cultural and racial chauvinism. Using the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* and *Journey to the West* as frames of reference, Li Ruzhen creates parodies of his *tianchao* [Heavenly Dynasty] world through his characters' encounters with the bizarre, peripheral worlds. In these Gulliver-like travels, we see Li Ruzhen's inclusive worldview transcend racial boundaries. Through the protagonists' travels in metaphorical lands, Li uses the peripheral to criticize the Confucian center. In chapters 16 through 19 Li describes the male protagonists' encounters in Black-tooth country. From the three male characters' reaction to and interaction with the dark-skinned citizens, the readers are presented with three types of Chinese attitudes towards the "racial" other.

First, Li uses Old Duojiu to typify male chauvinistic attitudes towards females and towards the racial other. Readers are told that when he first encountered the two talented girls, he thought to himself:

According to the manner of this girl's speech, she does not seem to be vulgar; it looks like she has a few years of study. It's a pity that she is just a juvenile female. One wonders whether there might be one or two things about which to talk to her? If she does have some literacy, my having a conversation with a foreign black woman could be an episode worthy of being talked about . . ." As he saw his travel partner, Tang Ao, humbling himself and extending a gentleman's courtesy to the Purple-Dress Girl, he also thought in his head, "They are just foreign young girls. It is easy to imagine how much learning

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<sup>16</sup> These two gardens were the settings and ideals of the two most important actual garden gatherings in Chinese literary history. The Golden Valley Garden was the summer villa of the extravagantly wealthy official and poet Shi Chong (249–300), who hosted a poetical gathering and literary celebration in the third century that became the model for the later and even more famous Orchid Pavilion gathering in 353 CE. These two gatherings had become the Chinese literati's reference events for literary communion.

<sup>17</sup> Hsia, 2004: 189.

they have had. Why does Brother Tang need to bother to humble himself so? He truly over-estimates them.<sup>18</sup>

Here, Li Ruzhen portrays a stereotypical Chinese male chauvinist, who, on the one hand, looks down upon the young female non-Chinese, but on the other hand desires the exotic experience of encountering the other. Li satirizes his chauvinistic assumption of cultural superiority (by virtue of being from within the seas) over the people of Black-tooth country, whose customs he disdains as still *chaoye* ["grass wild"] and whose language as *wuwei* [bland].<sup>19</sup>

Second, Li Ruzhen presents Old Duojiu's travel companion, Lin Zhiyang, the merchant, as a pure business man who seems indifferent to the dark-skinned land's cultural status. He cares more about making a profit than about making cultural judgments. Interestingly, Li Ruzhen makes him the informant concerning the Black-tooth country's value system. It is out of his merchant's curiosity and character that he inquires about the Black-tooth country's social values and reports to his two scholarly companions.

Then through Tang Ao, the novel's central hero, Li Ruzhen presents the third attitude toward the cultural other. Tang Ao, portrayed as a Confucian gentleman, exudes civility throughout his travel regardless of the lands visited, including here in the Black-tooth country. Li Ruzhen shows that after Tang Ao's encounter with the two young girl-scholars in Black-tooth country, his initial assumptions about the Black-tooth citizens' faces are altered to become admiration. In his transformed view, all the citizens, both male and female, have beautiful faces with bookish grace, and he feels his own inadequacy when compared to their scholarly graciousness.

Here, the fundamental views expressed in the discussion of cultural others are still based on the traditional literati view of *li* and culture, particularly literacy. The level of civilization and the difference between "foreignness" and "civility" are determined by learning (book-reading) and virtue, and not by geography or biology. Thus, the two talented girls from Black-tooth country, Hong Hong and Ting Ting, are on the list of the one hundred talents, and participate in the garden celebration banquets. They are, like the other talents, portrayed as incarnations of two of the one hundred flower fairies from heaven. In this travel satire, Li Ruzhen uses *wai* [outside], not *yi* when referring to the other, while neither racial nor

<sup>18</sup> Li, 1979: 97.

<sup>19</sup> Li, 1979: 94.

geographical differences are his criteria for determining a society's superiority or inferiority. Completed two decades before the First Opium War, *Jinghua yuan* is a cumulative novel that not only integrates various narrative conventions, but also "mirrors" China's eighteenth and nineteenth century literary development, socio-political and intellectual climate, literati life, and literati ambivalence about China's cultural heritage. C.T. Hsia observes that Li Ruzhen "did not live to see the First Opium War of 1839–1842. After that war, the Chinese scholars could no longer find the necessary composure and self-assurance to celebrate the multifarious aspects of his culture. It is symptomatic of this change in cultural outlook that no scholarly novels comparable in design and ambition to *Jinghua yuan* were produced during the remainder of the nineteenth century."<sup>20</sup>

### *Literati's Utopian Impulses after the Opium Wars*

After the Opium Wars, Chinese literati could no longer indulge in the old escapist metaphors. Alternative paths were sought, and two main outlets began to channel the literati's utopian impulse: first, statecraft discourse with the Gongyang school's Three-Age theory, and second, science fiction in the forms of sequels to traditional novels, such as *The New Story of the Stone* (1908), a sequel to Cao Xueqin's novel, or in the forms of didactic utopias and techno-utopias, such as *The Future of New China* and *Moon Colony* (1904), the latter of which imagines utopian worlds in outer space.<sup>21</sup> These futuristic fantasies envision a Chinese society with power and glory after its political reform and modernization.

The utopian vision of *The New Story of the Stone* serves as a good contrast to the idealized garden paradises in the old utopian vision. In the new novel, the utopia is envisioned as a "Civilized World," with strong military power and a strong political structure, scientific advancement, educational institutions, and moral cultivation. It has all the scientific and technological fantasies that we see in today's sci-fi movies, such as weather control, robot workers, wonder drugs, flying machines, "water boots" for walking on water, etc. This "Civilized World" has replaced the "Grand View Garden" to become the idealized existence that the pro-

<sup>20</sup> Hsia, 2004: 193.

<sup>21</sup> For further discussion of the development of Chinese science fiction with utopian themes in the late-Qing period, see Wang, D., 1997: 252–312.



tagonist Baoyu seeks.<sup>22</sup> As Baoyu, the Stone Incarnate, states in *The New Story of the Stone*, "When the Goddess produced stones of five colors, she meant to use them for mending Heaven. While the other 36,500 [stones] have been put to use, I alone have been neglected. Although I was later endowed with supernatural power, I wasted it by squandering some years with those girls in the Grand View Garden. I have yet to carry out my purpose of mending Heaven. If I could fulfill this wish, I would have no regrets even if I disappeared into smoke and ashes."<sup>23</sup> Baoyu's statement epitomizes utopian visions in late Qing Chinese literature, in which "mending heaven" in the forms of scientific and technological advancement in a world of racial struggles and survival has replaced the literati's garden metaphor. Socio-political activism and scientific innovation, not the Daoist escape into the garden, have become the flight to the ideal future. The literati's garden paradises were lost, nowhere to be found.

But we are jumping ahead of ourselves here. The explicit discourse of racial classification and racial struggle that dominates many of the utopian science fiction novels at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as *The New Story of the Stone* and *The New Century*, are the end results of the Chinese literati's half century of looking inward and outward for reform and survival. These literary utopian fantasies came after China suffered the humiliation of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), the failure of the Hundred Days Reform (1898), and the horror of the Boxer Rebellion. By then, China's *hua-yi* discourse and racial consciousness had gone through several stages of transformation and had been influenced by the Western construction of racial categories and the theory of evolution. Inspired by Herbert Spencer's "survival of the fittest" concept, Jules Verne's adventure novels, Thomas Henry Huxley's *Evolutions and Ethics*, Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, and a large number of Western science fiction stories serialized in Chinese magazines, the Chinese literati's utopian visions could not help being tainted by the bias of racial struggles and social Darwinism.<sup>24</sup>

### *The Transformation of Yi*

To trace the development of Chinese literati's racial consciousness, we should turn back to look at the Confucian utopian impulse among

<sup>22</sup> Wang, D., 1997: 273.

<sup>23</sup> Wang, D., 1997: 280.

<sup>24</sup> Tsu, 2005: 45–47; Wang, D., 1997: 270.

nineteenth century statecraft scholars as they negotiated between traditional Confucian utopianism and encroaching Western powers. In the statecraft writings of the Gongyang *Chunqiu* scholars, we can see the transformation of the Chinese literati's *hua-yi* discourse and utopian visions, particularly in the Three Ages [*sanshi*] theory. The Three Ages theory originated with the Han scholar Dong Zhongshu's (179–104 BCE) interpretation of the Gongyang Commentary of the *Chunqiu jing* [Spring and Autumn Annals]. By dividing the twelve generations of dukes recorded in the *Chunqiu* annals into three ranks and matching the three with the Gongyang Commentary's view of historiography ("being observed, being heard, and being passed down"), Dong proposed that the Gongyang *Chunqiu* presents a political theory of historical evolution throughout three ages. This Three Ages theory was later further developed by He Xiu (129–182) in his *Chunqiu gongyang jiegou* [Annotation of Gongyang *Chunqiu*] into an evolution of the world from an age of chaos, through an age of rising peace to a final age of universal peace. This view of history declined after the Han dynasty and remained inconsequential for nearly two millennia, until it was revived again in the late-eighteenth century when China's social and political climate became a fertile ground for re-examining the Confucian Classics.

It will do us well to examine the evolution of *hua-yi* discourse in early part of the Qing dynasty before we concern ourselves with the revival of the Gongyang school of thought. The Chinese literati saw the Ming-Qing transition as a catastrophic collapse of Chinese civilization. Many literati remained Ming royalists. The studies of *Chunqiu* and the *hua-yi* discourse became an anchor for the literati's coping mechanisms. The political philosophy of *zun-wang rang-yi* in the *Chunqiu* re-emerged to become the collective consciousness of the Ming loyalists. Some participated in military resistance and many committed suicide. After military resistance failed, many refused to serve the Manchus and retreated from the world. During the Ming-Qing transition, an offshoot of this passive resistance was the flourishing of literary societies that nourished the literati's reappraisal of Song and Ming scholarship which then spawned the revival of Han, or Evidential Learning [*kaozheng*].

While the early Qing literati hinged on the *hua-yi* binary opposition in the *Chunqiu*, the ruling Qing government was quite aware of this opposition and therefore actively sought ways to appropriate the *Chunqiu* and its commentaries as a way of justifying its legitimacy.<sup>25</sup> Both Emperor

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<sup>25</sup> Xiao, 2009: 77–149.

Kangxi (r. 1661–1722) and Emperor Yongzheng (r. 1722–1735) commissioned Confucian scholars to compile an official interpretation of the *Chunqiu*. *Qingding chunqiu chuanshuo huizuan* [*The imperial compilation of lore on the Chunqiu*] was completed in 1721. Between 1729 and 1731, after the legal cases against Lu Liuliang (1629–1683) and Zeng Jing (1679–1735) concerning their anti-Manchu writings, Emperor Yongzhen commissioned scholars to reedit Kangxi's *Rijian chunqiu jieyi* [*Daily lecture on the interpretation of the Chunqiu*], and compiled *Dayi juemi lu* [*A Recording of the Confusion of The Great Meanings* [of Chunqiu] in question-and-answer format in order to refute Zeng Jing's interpretation and application of *Chunqiu* as his seditious platform for political activism. Yongzheng also assigned Zhu Shi (1665–1736) to write *Bo Lu Liuliang sishu jiangy* [A rebuttal of Lu Liuliang's interpretation of the *Four Books*], and republished other imperial works on the *Chunqiu*. He then promulgated an imperial edict establishing these as required readings for all county schools and demanding that Han literati study these texts carefully.<sup>26</sup> These imperial publications were political tools used to present the government's official interpretation of the *Chunqiu* by deliberately underplaying the *rang-yi* [subdue the yi] aspect of the *Chunqiu* and shifting the focus to *zun wang* [honor the king] discourse while emphasizing the difference between *hua* and *yi* as cultural and ethical, not geographical or biological.<sup>27</sup>

By Qianlong's reign (1736–1795), and after more than one hundred years of propagating the "Manchu-Han One Body" paradigm and appropriating Confucian learning, the *hua-yi* binary was reshaped and the line of demarcation shifted. By the 1750s, after the conquest of Outer Mongolia and Xinjiang, the Qing court had shaped a new definition of China that was based on territorial administration over multiethnic groups.<sup>28</sup> Manchu and Han were now perceived as belonging to the same multiethnic entity—China. *Yi* was now used for labeling foreigners outside China's territory. Qianlong's 1787 reply to Shaanxi governor Bayansan's use of *yishi* [barbarian mission] for referring to a mission to Tibet in a memorandum was a clear example of this new view of *yi*: "Because Tibet has long been incorporated into our territory, it is completely different from Russia, which submits to our country in name only. Thus, we cannot consider the Tibetans foreign barbarians, unlike the Russians."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Xiao, 2009: 110–111.

<sup>27</sup> Xiao, 2009: 131.

<sup>28</sup> Zhao, 2006: 13.

<sup>29</sup> Zhao, 2006: 13.

*Nineteenth-Century Literati Statecraft and the Rise of Racial Discourse*

The fervor of evidential scholarship reached a new phase during the late 1700s, when a renewed study of the Old Text versus New Text debate generated new interpretations of Confucian Classics. The New Text camp advocated turning to the *Gongyang Commentary* as textual support for interpreting Confucius as a visionary of institutional reform. Developed by Changzhou school scholars such as Zhuang Chunyu (1719–1788) and Liu Fenglu (1776–1829) in the late eighteenth century, Gongyang studies and its Three Ages theory would become the underlying worldview of Gong Zizhen, Wei Yuan and Kang Youwei's utopian statecraft writings as they navigated the nettled course of China's deteriorating nineteenth century. These three thinkers' utopian visions of statecraft reflect the evolution of China's *hua-yi* and racial discourses in the course of the nineteenth century.

Gong Zizhen (1792–1841) and Wei Yuan (1794–1856) were both accomplished poets, scholars of Confucian classics, visionary thinkers, and advocates of practical applications of learning for improving the world [*jing xue zhi yong*]. Their writings mark a shift in the Chinese literati's approach towards learning about statecraft [*jingshi*, or world ordering]. Gong Zizhen, as a Han subject under a Manchu regime re-conceptualized the traditional *hua-yi* discourse and proposed a *bin bin* [respect for the guest] paradigm for ideal government. He suggested that each ruling house may benefit from “guests” in the sense of outsiders or survivors of other ruling houses who are the torch-bearers of the true Dao and the arts of civilization.<sup>30</sup> Applying this “respect for the guest” paradigm to Manchu-Han dynamics, Gong Zizhen removed the old Han-Manchu binary from nationalist discourse and made it a political theory.<sup>31</sup> In several treatises, Gong Zizhen identified Jizi [the viscount of the Shang dynasty] as the ideal model of such a political “guest.” According to “The Grand Model” [*Hongfan*] in the *Shangshu*, when Jizi was visited by King Wu of Zhou, Jizi offered King Wu “The Grand Model” as a plan which, Jizi alleged, was given to the sage king Yu by Heaven for good government. In his *Wujing dayi zhongshi wenda* [*Questions and answers of the great meanings of the Five Classics' end and beginning*], Gong Zizhen synthesizes “The Grand Model,” the “respect for the quest” ideal, and the Three Ages theory in order to construct his utopian discourse. By matching the *bazheng* [eight affairs of

<sup>30</sup> Gong, 1975: 27–28.

<sup>31</sup> Xiao, 2009: 13.

government] described in “The Grand Model” with his Three Ages theory, Gong concludes that the latter two affairs, *bin* [guest] and *shi* [teacher], belong to an point in time in which a civilization reaches the *taiping* age, in which Confucius’ and Jizi’s methods [*fa*] are applied. In this *taiping* age, the boundary between inside and outside disappears.<sup>32</sup>

Like the literati of his time, Gong Zizhen used the term *yi* in two ways: first, the non-Chinese lying outside Confucian norms in the past, and second, the foreigners defined as being outside Qing territorial administration. *Yi* still carries the traditional connotation of being “uncivilized,” but is now often attached to a prefix, such as *xiyi*, *yangyi*, or *yingyi* [for the English]. It is noteworthy to mention that Gong Zizhen did not have a *hua-yi* discourse. Rather, he had a *yi* discourse that is confined within the subjects of the “monstrosity” [*yao*] of opium traffic and the dangers lying ahead if China did not resist the West’s trade ambition. In a preface written in 1823 for the biographical annals of Ruan Yizhen, the governor of the two Cantons at the time, Gong Zizhen included the following warnings about the English: “East of Canton’s various port cities is the Pacific Ocean. Only the *yingyi* [English] have been in the vicinity. Indeed, they are extremely cunning. If we reject them, they will knock on our gate. If we become friendly with them, they will embezzle our state. We need to prepare to defend ourselves, planning ‘before the rain’ with deep worries and secret calculations, as the world is not fully aware of this dangerous situation.”<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, Gong Zizhen died in the throes of the First Opium War, and left us to ponder how his *yi* discourse would have changed after the war.

A good friend of Gong Zizhen, Wei Yuan, survived the shock of the First Opium War to provide his own remedy for China’s failure. While Gong Zizhen’s writing reflects prophetic warnings and a strong resistance to the West, Wei Yuan’s post-Opium War writings are his response to the war. As stated quite eloquently by Susan Mann Jones and Philip A. Kuhn, “it is tempting in fact to see in Wei Yuan the confluence of all the major currents of the early nineteenth century: not only in his role as a statecraft writer and as an adherent of the New Text school, but also as a mirror of the changes confronting the society of his day.”<sup>34</sup> His *Shengwu ji* [*Military History of the Qing*] and *Haiguo tuzhi* [*Illustrated Gazetteer of the Maritime Countries*] mark a new milestone in Chinese statecraft writing and provide

<sup>32</sup> Gong, 1975: 29–36, 41–48.

<sup>33</sup> Gong, 1975: 229.

<sup>34</sup> Jones and Kuhn, 1978: 149.

post-Opium War China with a realistic picture of military affairs and the outside world.<sup>35</sup> Wei's remarkable accomplishment did not just have a tremendous impact on nineteenth century Chinese intelligentsia, but also influenced many Japanese thinkers and reformers of the Meiji Restoration.<sup>36</sup> Like Gong Zizhen, Wei Yuan also espoused the Three Ages theory in Gongyang terms and expanded *hua-yi* discourse into a new vision of China's relations with the outside world. For him, *hua-yi* discourse was no longer just about differentiation. How to deal and interact with the foreign "barbarians" was the underlying reason for why the *Haiguo tuzhi* and *Shengwu ji* were written in the first place. In his preface to *Haiguo tuzhi*, Wei Yuan clearly explains:

In what respect does this work differ from the gazetteers of earlier writers? The answer is that those earlier works all described the West as it appeared to Chinese writers, while this book describes the West as it appears to Westerners. What is the purpose of the present work? Its purpose is to show how to use *yi* to fight *yi* [*yi-yi gong-yi*], how to make the *yi* pacify one another [*yi-yi kuan-yi*] [to our advantage], and how to learn the good practices of the *yi* in order to bring the *yi* under control [*shi yi changji yi zhi yi*]. . . . In ancient times those who succeeded in driving off the *yi* knew the enemy's position as clearly as if it were spread out upon their own desk or carpet; they were informed of the enemy's condition as intimately as if the enemy were dining or sleeping with them.<sup>37</sup>

A number of scholars have noticed that Wei Yuan's *Haiguo tuzhi* followed the conventional organizational structure and adopted a traditional vocabulary by organizing the world in terms of ocean regions, as if it were the nineteenth century version of *Shanhai jing* [*the Classic of Mountains and Seas*], with China as the center of the maritime world.<sup>38</sup> However, Wei Yuan, the statecraft scholar, was quite aware of the endangered stance of China as the center of the maritime world. His preface introduces a major departure from the traditional Confucian *hua-yi* discourse in that, in Mencius' words, only *xia* [Chinese] could transform *yi*, but not the other way round. By compiling *Haiguo tuzhi*, Wei Yuan introduced a new paradigm of perceiving the world and a new *hua-yi* binary that was not articulated before. While Gong Zizhen advocated a hard-line resistance

<sup>35</sup> The first edition was published in 1842 and contained fifty chapters. The second edition was published in 1847 and contained 60 chapters, and the third edition was published in 1852 and further expanded to 100 chapters.

<sup>36</sup> Tankha, 2000.

<sup>37</sup> Trans. by K.C. Liu in De Bary and Lufrano, 2000: 209–210.

<sup>38</sup> E.g., Dikötter, 1992: 49; Leonard, 1984: 109.

to trading with the West, and forewarned of the dangers of the *yi*, Wei Yuan now saw the need to learn from the enemy in order to resist them and reform China.

In the preface, Wei Yuan also states that *Haiguo tuzhi* was “brought together and thoroughly researched” from three types of sources: *Gazetteers of the Four Continents* [*Sizhou ji*] (based on the translations of Hugh Murray’s (1779–1846) *Encyclopedia of Geography* carried out by Lin Zexu’s translation bureau), geographical histories and gazetteers of previous dynasties, and “barbarian maps and writings.” Although only about twenty percent of the bibliography is from Western sources, more than seventy percent of the content is comprised of direct quotations from books and journals written by foreign missionaries.<sup>39</sup> In the Postscript to the 1852 edition, Wei Yuan provides a few of these titles and mentions that he recently acquired *Dili beikao* (*A Study of Geography*, 1847) by the Portuguese Ma Jishi (José Martinho Marques, 1810–1867), and praises the two chapters on Europe as particularly grand writing, “having the merit of expanding the mind and intellect by thousands of years.” He even lifted the entire *Diqiu zonglun* [An Overview of the Globe] section from *Dili beikao* for chapter 76.<sup>40</sup> Ma Jishi’s overview covers five aspects: the composition of a globe having five continents, the size of the globe, the world’s five racial categories [*zhong*] according to skin colors and physical features, the three degrees of human civilization and the world’s languages and language groups.

Through this overview of the globe, Wei Yuan introduced to China not just the Western racial classification system, but also the hierarchy of human communities to China. Ma Jishi divided human civilization into three ranks: “the lowest one is an undeveloped one with illiteracy and hunter-gatherers and nomads; the middle one is one that is developing literacy, rules of law, and statehood, but whose knowledge is still shallow and crude. The highest level of human civilization is the one that pursues knowledge, cultivates morals, virtues, classics and ethical codes, and who recognizes them as such. During times of peace, it befriends neighboring states, and treats them with *li* and righteousness. When warfare arises, it wards off its enemy, defending its country.”<sup>41</sup> One can see why Wei Yuan was particularly taken by Ma Jishi’s book. This tripartite ranking system readily strikes a chord with the Three Ages theory envisioned by the

<sup>39</sup> Liu, 2009: 68–70; Chen, 1979: 180–195.

<sup>40</sup> Wei, 1999: 19–30, 70–71.

<sup>41</sup> Wei, 1999: 426.



Gongyang school of thought. However, it is also worth mentioning that the racial classification according to skin color described in Ma's text is neither linked with this tripartite ranking of human civilization nor presented as a hierarchical system.

Wei Yuan also includes Ma Jishi's preface to his book, in which the definitions and boundaries of *yi* were questioned and the traditional Confucian universalism—"tianxia [all under heaven] as one family" and "all within *sihai* [four seas] are brothers"—was used as conclusion:

As for the labels for *Man*, *Di*, *Jian*, *Yi*, [these] are especially for people of cruel and abusive temperament, those who don't know about noble culture [*wang hua*]. Therefore, the ancient kings treated *yi* and *di* as if they were animals and ruled them without governing. This does not mean that all countries outside of ours, including those with etiquette and culture, are all *yi* and *di* [barbarians]. . . . Sincerely knowing that among guests from afar, there are those who have civilized decorum/etiquette and [who] follow justice, [and are] able to understand the heavenly phenomena above and observe the geography . . . these are prodigies of the maritime circuits and good friends of outside lands. How can we call them *yi* and *di*? The sage sees all under heaven as one family, all from the four seas are brothers; therefore, we should conciliate the "distant people" and treat foreign countries as guests—with hospitality. This is a noble person's magnanimity. It is a wise scholar's broad awareness to consulting all sorts of customs and extensively surveying the globe.<sup>42</sup>

These words were not Wei Yuan's own, but the fact that he included them in the expanded 100-chapter edition suggests his appreciation of this worldview. Despite the antagonistic *yi-yi zhi-yi* [use *yi* to fight *yi*] stance in his *hua-yi* discourse, Wei Yuan was, after all, a Confucian scholar steeped in the literati's longing for an age of universal peace.

China took time to shed its ambivalent habit of using *yi* as a signifier for foreigners. As late as 1850, Chinese official documents still used the term *yi* for referring to foreigners. According to Fang Weigui's study of the "transitional phenomenon" of gradually replacing *yi* with other terms, the usage of *yi* declined after 1860. This decline is apparently related to Article 51 of the Tianjin Treaty (1858) between China and England, which stipulated that the English may not be degraded as *yi*.<sup>43</sup> Since 1860, *yang* slowly replaced *yi*. After the Tianjin Treaty, *yiwu* [barbarian affairs] was replaced by *yangwu* [oceanic affairs] and later replaced by *waiwu* [foreign

<sup>42</sup> Wei, 1999: 423.

<sup>43</sup> Fang, 2001: 112–116.

affairs]. The fact that the prohibition of *yi* had to be written into the treaty suggests its prevalence, something which obviously irritated the English.

With two Opium Wars as wake-up calls, continuous foreign aggressions and the internal rebellions of the Taiping (1850–64), Nian (1853–68) and Muslims (1862–77), more Chinese scholar-officials came to recognize the need for modernization and social reform. Feng Guifen (1809–1874), a follower of Lin Zexu (1785–1850), reflected upon China's condition in 1861's *Jiaobin lu kangyi* [*Petitions from the Jiaobin Studio*] which contains the following self-questioning and diagnosis:

Why are the Western nations small and yet strong? Why are we large and yet weak? We must search for the means to become their equal, and that depends solely upon human effort. As for the present situation, several observations may be made: in not wasting human talents, we are inferior to the barbarian; in not wasting natural resources, we are inferior to the barbarian; in allowing no barrier to come between the ruler and the people, we are inferior to the barbarians, and in the matching of words with deeds, we are also inferior to the barbarians. The remedy for those four points is to seek the causes in ourselves.<sup>44</sup>

Like most literati of his time, Feng Guifen continued to use *yi* for designating foreigners. However, *yi* was no longer associated with backwardness or barbarism. *Yi*, for Feng Guifen, “referred less to uncivilized and insensitive people without culture but rather signified the people and countries in Europe and North America that, in a way, had to be envied. He seems to have used *yi* for solely rhetorical purposes.”<sup>45</sup> In fact, Feng Guifen devoted the last three treatises of his 40-treatise *Petitions from the Jiaobin Studio* on how to deal with the West. In *Cai xixue yi* [Treatise on employing Western learning], he suggests that China “take the foreign nations as examples” and “let Chinese ethics and Confucian teachings serve as the foundations, and let them be supplemented by the methods used by the various nations for the attainment of prosperity and power.”<sup>46</sup> In response to Wei's antagonistic stance, Feng Guifen refuted Wei Yuan's bellicose language and criticized him for having a narrow worldview of the Warring States period which was no longer appropriate for the current situation. In *Shanyu yi yi* [*Treatise on the Sound Harnessing of yi*], the concluding treatise, he argues that *yiwu* [barbarian affairs] should be a top government concern, and emphasizes the importance of using diplomacy

<sup>44</sup> Trans. by K.C. Liu in De Bary and Lufrano, 2000: 235–236.

<sup>45</sup> Fang, 2001: 111.

<sup>46</sup> Feng, 1883.

rather than war for solving conflicts. In the end, he concludes that “self-strengthening” was the foundation for avoiding conflicts.<sup>47</sup>

Feng Guifen’s vision, as outlined in *Petitions from Jiaobin Studio*, was soon espoused by the Self-Strengthening movement guided by leaders such as Zeng Guofan (1811–1872), Zuo Zongtang (1812–1885), Li Hongzhang (1823–1901) and Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909). Their famous slogan, “Chinese learning for substance, Western learning for function,” quite succinctly expresses the utopian statecraft of Chinese scholar-officials in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Self-Strengthening movement’s philosophies were eventually tested during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. The humiliation of the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1898) verified the younger generation’s long suspicion that the Self-Strengthening movement’s moderate reform had failed and more radical measures were necessary. Compounded by China’s existential crises and by the tidal waves of Western learning, Chinese literati’s late nineteenth century utopian visions were blemished with nationalistic racialism and social Darwinism.

By the end of nineteenth century, the *hua-yi* binary discourse was replaced with competing racial discourses adopting the neologism of color-coded racial classification, racial hierarchy and an awareness of the Chinese as a ‘yellow race.’ Had the existence of China’s earlier ethnic worldview facilitated the Chinese adoption of Western racial views? Or was it the “Chinese view of the universe, which tends to divide both the human and the physical worlds into a number of fixed categories, and which, in the human world, tries to classify each man under one of these categories”<sup>48</sup> that made the Chinese literati susceptible to Western racial worldviews? In the discussion of the Chinese adoption of racial hierarchy presented in his 1992 book *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, Frank Dikötter, refers to Derk Bodde’s study of “Chinese Categorical Thinking” and concludes that “Chinese attempts to classify human beings into categories, similar to the theories on [humors] in medieval Europe, were indeed widespread and intrusive.”<sup>49</sup> He then proceeds to assert that Chinese reformers of late nineteenth century “projected this native hierarchical model upon the world [and order] was reconstructed by means of traditional classifications.”<sup>50</sup> The problem with Frank Dikötter’s assertion is that Bodde’s “Types of Chinese Categorical Thinking” clearly points

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<sup>47</sup> Feng, 1883.

<sup>48</sup> Bodde, 1939: 200.

<sup>49</sup> Dikötter, 1992: 81.

<sup>50</sup> Dikötter, 1992: 81.

out that “the Chinese attempts to classify human beings under various categories [were] usually according to their mental and moral characteristics, or according to the types of activities which they should pursue in society.”<sup>51</sup>

As Bodde demonstrates in the same article, the Confucian tradition of classifying humanity is a classification of human character based upon moral and intellectual abilities, not according to physical stereotypes of groups. This moral classification convention which began with Confucius is part of the Chinese meritocracy and bureaucratic ranking system.<sup>52</sup> It could be that nineteenth century Chinese literati were predisposed to Western racial discourses because of China’s traditional cosmological systems and categorical thinking, such as the applications of *yin-yang* and *wuxing* [the Five Elements] theories to perceiving the universe, the world, society, geography, medicine, human anatomy and other things. However, in the context of racial classification, to say that “the reformers [of the late nineteenth century] projected this native hierarchical model upon the world [and order] was reconstructed by means of traditional classifications”<sup>53</sup> is an inappropriate grafting. The Confucian moral classification is based on individual merit rather than on the group stereotypes that racial classification was based upon.

In the late nineteenth century, three competing racial discourses took center stage in the reformers’ utopian statecraft: first, the mounting anti-Manchuism and racial nationalism of the Han revolutionaries; second, the preservation of the Chinese race as essential to China’s survival; and third, the amalgamation of races or erasure of racial boundaries as a viable way towards a utopian world of grand union.<sup>54</sup> The first is reflected and defined in Sun Yat-sen’s *minzu zhuyi* [nationalism], one of Sun’s “Three Principles of the People.” The second discourse is best represented by Zhang Zhidong’s “United Hearts” treatise in the *Quanxue pian* [Exhortation to Learn], published shortly after the fiasco of the Hundred Days Reform in 1898 and meant as an “exhortation” of the reformers’ radical measures:

I have learned of three things that are necessary for saving China in the present crisis. The first is to maintain the state. The second is to preserve the doctrine of Confucius, and the third is to protect the Chinese race. These

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<sup>51</sup> Bodde, 1939: 203.

<sup>52</sup> Bodde, 1939.

<sup>53</sup> Dikötter, 1992: 81.

<sup>54</sup> Dikötter, 1992; Tsu, 2005.

three are inseparably related. We must protect the state, the doctrine, and the race with one heart, and this is what we mean by united hearts.<sup>55</sup>

The third discourse, elaborated most avidly in Kang Youwei's *Datong shu*, reflects a utopian vision that represents the culmination of the Chinese literati's efforts to integrate traditional utopian discourse and Western learning. Besides being the key instigator of the Hundred Day Reform, Kang Youwei (1858–1927) was probably the most complex and controversial figure among late-Qing utopians and scholar-reformers. His life, his writings and the formation of his thought and activism have been studied extensively. The development of Kang's thought in the form of a "syncretic utopianism" incorporating his own stream of New Text Confucian scholarship and Western learning has been well articulated by Frederic Wakeman, Jr. in *History and Will*.<sup>56</sup> The messianic vision Kang presents in *Datong shu*, completed in 1902, is an amalgamation of his re-conceptualized Three Ages theory, Gongyang *Chunqiu* criticism, the "One-World" from *Liyun*, the Mahayana Buddhist ideal of undifferentiated organic oneness, and social Darwinism.<sup>57</sup> The sources for Kang's inspiration have been traced to foreign works such as Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, [An] *Imagined Excursion to the Planets* by Inoue Enryō (1858–1919), and Western scientific works translated by the Jiangnan Arsenal's Translation Division.<sup>58</sup> Employing Buddhist terminology and taking a step further from his Gongyang school predecessors, Kang envisioned a world of grand union in which all boundaries (nation, class, race, gender, family and property) disappeared in favor of a world of universal peace [*taiping*]. Incorporating the neologisms of skin-color-based racial classification and the Western premises of racial hierarchy and eugenics, Kang delineates the viability of his utopian racial homogeneity by diluting inferior races through interbreeding with superior ones.<sup>59</sup> The fallacy of Kang's utopianism is perhaps best encapsulated by Paul Tillich's succinct but profound conclusion about utopias, namely that "it is the spirit of utopia that conquers utopia."<sup>60</sup>

Like the scholars and intellectuals in any society and any historical period, Chinese literati are products of their time and culture and con-

<sup>55</sup> Trans. by K.C. Liu in De Bary and Lufrano, 2000: 245–246.

<sup>56</sup> Wakeman, 1973.

<sup>57</sup> Chang, 1987: 56–57; Wakeman, 1973: 116–119; Wang, D., 1997: 278.

<sup>58</sup> Tsu, 2005: 45.

<sup>59</sup> Kang, 1958: 140–148.

<sup>60</sup> Manuel, 1996: 309.

finer by their worldviews and fallibilities. The inflections of Chinese *hua-yi* discourse reflect not just China's relations and interactions with its peripheral others, but also China's internal political strengths or turmoil. While the traditional utopian visions of Daoist flights and Confucian "Grand Union" seem to transcend the *hua-yi* binary, the late-Qing utopian reformers, in their pursuits of universal peace and Grand Union [*datong*], could not transcend the racialism and social Darwinism they encountered. In his *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (1992), Frankö argues that "the development of a racial consciousness during [nineteenth-century China], however, was due largely to internal developments."<sup>61</sup> As this chapter has demonstrated, China's development of racial consciousness was not "largely an internal development." During the nineteenth century, the Qing literati's *hua-yi* discourse and racial consciousness evolved as China confronted the West and the Opium Wars were a crucial turning point in this development.

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<sup>61</sup> Dikötter, 1992: 34.





## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### THE DISCOURSE OF RACE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHINA

Frank Dikötter

While over fifty different “minority nationalities” [*shaoshu minzu*] are officially recognized to exist in the People’s Republic of China (PRC), well over 90 percent of the population are classified as Han, a term translated in English as “ethnic Chinese” or “Chinese of native stock.” Despite the existence in China of cultural, linguistic and regional differences which are as great as those to be found in Europe, the Han are claimed by mainland officials to be a homogeneous ethnic group [*minzu*] with common origins, a shared history and an ancestral territory. “Han” and “Chinese” have become virtually identical not only within official rhetoric and scholarly discourse in the PRC, but also in the eyes of many foreign scholars. Eric Hobsbawm, for instance, perpetuates the notion of a Han majority by noting that China is among “the extremely rare examples of historic states composed of a population that is ethnically almost or entirely homogeneous.”<sup>1</sup> Only recently have some researchers started to refute the notion of an ethnic majority and attempted to describe China as a mosaic composed of many culturally diverse groups within the so-called “Han.”<sup>2</sup> While references did exist in traditional China to the descendants of the various Han dynasties (206 BCE–AD 220), the representation of the “Han” as an ethnically integrated majority is a modern phenomenon intrinsically linked to the rise of nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century. In a nutshell, the idea of a Han majority is a modern invention which was first used by nationalist elites to forge a sense of racial identity among China’s various population groups vis-à-vis foreign powers which threatened the country and in opposition to the Manchus who ruled the Qing empire until its fall in 1911.

After the fall of the empire, racial theories continued to underpin Chinese nationalism. As Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925)—founder of the Guomindang, China’s Nationalist Party, and widely accepted as the “father” of the

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<sup>1</sup> Hobsbawm, 1990: 66.

<sup>2</sup> Moser, 1985; Gladney, 1991.

nation in China and in Taiwan to this day—put it in his famous *Three Principles of the People*, “The greatest force is common blood. The Chinese belong to the yellow race because they come from the blood stock of the yellow race. The blood of ancestors is transmitted by heredity down through the race, making blood kinship a powerful force.”<sup>3</sup> Sun Yat-sen and other political leaders considered the Han to constitute the absolute majority in China, a distinct people with shared physical attributes and a line of blood which could be traced back to the most ancient period. If we can define socially constructed “races” as population groups imagined to have boundaries based on real or fictitious biological characteristics, and if these can be contrasted with socially constructed “ethnicities,” which are population groups thought to be based on culturally acquired characteristics, then political elites in modern China saw both as coterminous: ideas of “culture,” “ethnicity” and “race,” in other words, were often conflated by political and intellectual elites in order to represent cultural features as secondary to and derivative of an imagined racial specificity.

Politics have been essential in the making of racial discourse in modern China: in order to legitimize control over the territory which was part of the empire until 1911, from Manchuria to Tibet, the political leaders of the Republic until 1949 and the People’s Republic after 1949 reinvented subject peoples in border areas as mere sub-branches of the Han. This vision emphasizes both the organic unity of all the peoples living within the political boundaries of China and the inevitable fusion of non-Han groups into a broader Chinese nation dominated by the Han: the political boundaries of the state, in short, could be claimed to reflect a more profound biological unity between the various peoples of China.<sup>4</sup> Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975), the effective head of the Nationalist Republic from 1927 to 1949 and the leader of the Guomindang, clearly expressed this vision of the nation as a culturally diverse but racially unified entity in his important work entitled *China’s Destiny*, written during the fight against Japan in World War II:

Our various clans actually belong to the same nation, as well as to the same racial stock. Therefore, there is an inner factor closely linking the historical destiny of common existence and common sorrow and joy of the whole Chinese nation. That there are five people designated in China is not due to

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<sup>3</sup> Sun, 1927: 4–5.

<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, non-Han peoples’ appropriation of racial discourse could also allow them to reject assimilation to the Han and mark ethnic boundaries. For an illuminating case study in the Republican period, see Yang, 2010.

differences in race or blood, but to religion and geographical environment. In short, the differentiation among China's five peoples is due to regional and religious factors, and not to race or blood. This fact must be thoroughly understood by all our fellow countrymen.<sup>5</sup>

While this assimilationist vision is closely linked to the politics of national unity, its legitimacy has been based primarily on a system of knowledge called "science." Racial theories were made possible only by the advent of scientific knowledge in Europe from the late eighteenth century onwards, as "science" offered a whole new language from which a relationship between culture and biology could for the first time be systematically imagined. Racial theories, first in parts of Europe and gradually elsewhere around the world, sought to represent social groups as biological units: racial theorists appropriated science, from craniology to genetics, in order to present the group boundaries they had constructed as being objectively grounded in the natural laws of evolution. In Europe, China and many other parts of the globe, negative attitudes about the physical appearance of individuals or entire population groups can be found before modernity, but these attitudes rarely formed a coherent and credible worldview.

The politics of nationalism and the language of science were both intrinsic to modernity and appeared in China only with the reform movement which gained momentum after the country's defeat against Japan in 1894–95. Imperial reformers after 1895 proposed to strengthen China in its confrontation with foreign powers by reforming the thought and behavior of all the people. The first to articulate systematically a nationalist agenda of reform in which all citizens would participate in the revival of the country, the reformers rejected the Confucian classics and appealed instead to a foreign system of knowledge called "science" to underpin their message of change, as we see next.

### *The Background: Early Conceptions of Lineage, Race and Nation*

Racial theories were dependent on "science," which only appeared in parts of Europe from the late eighteenth century onwards before emerging elsewhere across the globe. Attitudes towards outsiders in imperial China have often been described as "culturalist": lack of adherence to the cultural norms and ritual practices of Confucianism were the principal

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<sup>5</sup> Chiang, 1947: 39–40.

markers distinguishing outsiders, often referred to as “barbarians,” from insiders. In an assimilationist vision, however, barbarians could be culturally absorbed—*laihua*, “come and be transformed,” or *hanhua*, “become Chinese.” The *Chunqiu*, a chronological history of the Spring and Autumn period (722–481 BCE) traditionally attributed to Confucius, hinged on the idea of cultural assimilation. In his commentary on the *Gongyang*, He Xiu (AD 129–182) later distinguished between the *zhuxia*, the “various people of Xia [the first Chinese empire],” and the Yi and Di barbarians, living outside the scope of the Chinese cultural sphere. In the Age of Great Peace, an allegorical concept similar to the Golden Age in the West, the barbarians would flow in and be transformed: the world would be one.

Some researchers have questioned the “culturalist” thesis by drawing attention to passages from the Classics of Confucianism which are apparently incompatible with the concept of cultural universalism. Most quoted is the *Zuozhuan* (fourth century BCE), a feudal chronicle: “If he is not of our race, he is sure to have a different mind” [*fei wo zulei, qi xin bi yi*].<sup>6</sup> This sentence seems to support the allegation that at least some degree of “racial discrimination” existed during the early stages of Chinese civilization. Both interpretations, however, have in common the adoption of a modern conceptual framework that distinguishes sharply between “culture” and “race,” a distinction which was not clearly expressed before the advent of modernity. In China and in many other parts of the globe, physical markers and cultural characteristics were rarely separated, nor were perceived bodily differences rationalized into a coherent system which might legitimize discrimination. A revealing illustration of the lack of distinction between “race” and “culture” appears in a twelfth-century description of African slaves, bought from Arab merchants by rich merchants in Canton:

Their color is black as ink, their lips are red and their teeth white, their hair is curly and yellow. There are males and females . . . They live in the mountains (or islands) beyond the seas. They eat raw things. If, in captivity, they are fed on cooked food, after several days they get diarrhoea. This is called “changing the bowels” [*huanchang*]. For this reason they sometimes fall ill and die; if they do not die one can keep them, and after having been kept a long time they begin to understand human speech [i.e., Chinese], although they themselves cannot speak it.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Dikötter, 1992: 3.

<sup>7</sup> Duyvendak, 1949: 24.

In popular Daoism, a human had to change bones [*huangu*] in order to become immortal: by analogy, African slaves were expected to change bowels [*huanchang*] to become half-human. A physical transformation, in other words, was perceived to be an intrinsic part of cultural assimilation. Even in the nineteenth century, scholar-officials like Xu Jiyu who had extended contact with European traders and were familiar with world geography wrote how “the hair and eyes of some [Europeans] gradually turn black when they come to China and stay for a long time. The features of such men and women half-resemble the Chinese.”<sup>8</sup> If it could be shown that negative representations of physical markers existed in traditional China,<sup>9</sup> no concept of “race” nor any systematic attempt to classify population groups on the basis of such markers existed until the emergence of modernity in the 1890s.

While long-standing attitudes towards physical characteristics may have facilitated the appearance of racial identities in China after 1895, several historical factors were more directly relevant, namely (1) the social institution and cultural discourse of the lineage, (2) the search for wealth, power and unity by the reformers after the defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 and (3) the anti-Manchu nationalism of the revolutionaries in the first decade of this century. Lineage discourse under the Qing—a dynasty founded in 1644 by the Manchus after their invasion of China—was perhaps one of the most prominent building-blocks in the construction of symbolic boundaries between racially defined groups of people.

The Qing era was marked by a consolidation of the cult of patrilineal descent, center of a broad movement of social reform that had emphasized the family and the lineage [*zu*] since the collapse of the Ming. Considerable friction arose between lineages throughout the nineteenth century in response to heightened competition over natural resources, the need to control market towns, the gradual erosion of social order and organization disorders caused by demographic pressures. Lineage feuds as well as interethnic conflicts [*fenlei xiedou*] prevailed throughout the empire, but were more common in the south-east, where lineages had grown more powerful than in the north.<sup>10</sup> The militarization of powerful lineages reinforced folk models of kinship solidarity, forcing in turn more loosely organized associations to form a unified descent group under the leadership

<sup>8</sup> Xu, 1861: *juan* 4, p. 7b.

<sup>9</sup> Dikötter, 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Lamley, 1977.

of the gentry. At court level too, notions of descent became increasingly important, in particular with the erosion of a sense of cultural identity among Manchu aristocrats. Pamela Crossley has shown how ethnic identity through patrilineal descent became important in the Qianlong period (1736–95), when the court progressively turned towards a rigid taxonomy of distinct descent lines [*zu*] to distinguish between Han, Manchu, Mongol or Tibetan.<sup>11</sup> Within three distinct social levels—popular culture, gentry society and court politics—the common notion of patrilineal descent came to be deployed on a widespread scale in the creation and maintenance of group boundaries.<sup>12</sup>

After the Qing's disastrous defeat against Japan, leading reformers like Liang Qichao (1873–1929) and Kang Youwei (1858–1927) searched for a unifying concept capable of binding all the Manchu emperor's subjects together as a powerful nation which could resist the foreign encroachments which had started with the First Opium War (1839–42). They used new evolutionary theories to represent the world as a battlefield in which different "races" struggled for survival. But while they appealed to such foreign luminaries as Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, their understanding of "race" was also informed by their own background. They did not simply copy what they read from these authors, but instead endowed "race" with indigenous meanings, portraying it primarily as an extension of the patrilineage, an all-important social institution in imperial China. The reformers used patrilineal culture to represent all inhabitants of China as the descendants of the Yellow Emperor, a mythical national figure thought to have reigned from 2697 to 2597 BCE.

Extrapolating from an indigenous vision of lineage feuds, which permeated the social landscape of late imperial China, the reformers projected a racialized worldview in which "yellows" competed with "whites" over degenerate breeds of "browns," "blacks" and "reds." Thriving on its affinity with lineage discourse, the notion of "race" gradually emerged as the most common symbol of national cohesion, permanently replacing more conventional emblems of cultural identity. The threat of racial extinction [*miezhong*], a powerful message of fear based on more popular anxieties about lineage extinction [*miezu*], was often invoked to bolster the reformers' message of change in the face of imperialist aggressions: "They will enslave us and hinder the development of our spirit and body... The

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<sup>11</sup> Crossley, 1990.

<sup>12</sup> For the premodern discourse on patrilineal descent and its institutional effects, also see Ebrey, 1996 and Wang, 2002.

brown and black races constantly waver between life and death, why not the 400 million of yellows?"<sup>13</sup> In the reformers' symbolic network of racialized others, the dominating "white" and "yellow races" were opposed to the "darker races," doomed to extinction by hereditary inadequacy. The social hierarchy which existed between different groups of people in the empire was expanded into a vision of racial hierarchy characterized by "noble" [*guizhong*] and "low" [*jianzhong*], "superior" [*youzhong*] and "inferior" [*liezhong*], "historical" and "ahistorical races" [*youlishi de zhongzu*]. The distinction between "common people" [*liangmin*] and "mean people" [*jianmin*], widespread in China until the early eighteenth century, found an echo in Tang Caichang (1867–1900), who opposed "fine races" [*liangzhong*] to "mean races" [*jianzhong*]. He phrased it in evenly balanced clauses reminiscent of his classical education: "Yellow and white are wise, red and black are stupid; yellow and white are rulers, red and black are slaves; yellow and white are united, red and black are scattered."<sup>14</sup>

The reformers used Social-Darwinian theories very selectively, claiming that racial survival [*baozhong*] in a context of international competition was the inescapable consequence of profound evolutionary forces. Rather than appealing to Charles Darwin's emphasis on competition between individuals of the same species, they were inspired by Herbert Spencer's focus on group selection. For reformers like Yan Fu, Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei, processes of evolution were directed by the principle of racial grouping, as individuals of a race should unite in order to survive in the struggle for existence much as each cell contributed to the overall health of a living organism. Apart from the individualistic basis for competition, the reformers also ignored the neo-Darwinian emphasis on the branching process of evolution. They adopted a Neo-Lamarckian theory of linear evolution, which viewed human development as a single line of ascent from the apes: the embryo developed in a purposeful way towards maturity, and this process could be guided by changes to the social and political environment. Neo-Lamarckism offered a flexible vision of evolution which closely suited the political agenda of the reformers, as human progress in the realm of politics was seen to be conducive to the racial improvement of the species.

The reformers also proposed a form of constitutional monarchy which included the Manchu emperor: their notion of a "yellow race" [*huangzhong*] was broad enough to include all the people living in the Middle

<sup>13</sup> Yan, 1959: 22.

<sup>14</sup> Tang, 1968: 468.



Kingdom. In the wake of the abortive Hundred Days Reform of 1898, which ended when the empress dowager rescinded all the reform decrees and executed several reformer officials, a number of radical intellectuals began advocating the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty. Not without resemblance to the 1789 and 1848 political revolutions in Europe, the anti-Manchu revolutionaries represented the ruling elite as an inferior "race" which was responsible for the disastrous policies which had led to the decline of the country, while most inhabitants of China were seen to be part of a homogeneous Han race. In the search for national unity, the notion of a Han race emerged in a context of opposition both to foreign powers and to the ruling Manchus. For the revolutionaries, the idea of a "yellow race" was too vague as it included the much reviled Manchus. Whereas the reformers viewed "race" [*zhongzu*] as a biological extension of lineage [*zu*], including all people dwelling on the soil of the Yellow Emperor, the revolutionaries excluded the Mongols, Manchus, Tibetans and other population groups from their definition of race, which was narrowed down to the Han, who were referred to as a *minzu*.

*Minzu*, a key term used interchangeably for both "ethnic group" and "nationality" after 1949, referred to a common descent group with a distinct culture and territory. During the incipient period of 1902 to 1911, moreover, *minzu* as a term was used to promote symbolic boundaries of blood and descent: "nationalities" as political units were equated with "races" as biological units. In the nationalist ideology of the first decade of the twentieth century, *minzu* was thought to be based on a quantifiable number of people called "Han," a group with clear boundaries by virtue of imagined blood and descent. Sun Yat-sen became one of the principal proponents of a Chinese *minzu*, which he claimed was linked primarily by "common blood." *Minzuzhuyi*, or "the doctrine of the *minzu*," became the term used to translate into Chinese the ideology of nationalism, thus clearly indicating the overlap which was envisaged between nation and race. Nationalism was the first principle of Sun Yat-sen's "Three Principles of the People," and it has been adopted ever since by both the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party.

The myth of blood was sealed by elevating the legendary figure of the Yellow Emperor into a national symbol. The Yellow Emperor [*Huangdi*] was hailed as the first ancestor [*shizu*] of the Han race, and his portrait served as the frontispiece in many nationalist publications. From mid-1903, the revolutionaries started using dates based on the supposed birthday of the Yellow Emperor. Liu Shipei (1884–1919), for instance, published an article advocating the introduction of a calendar in which the founda-

tion year of the republic corresponded to the birth of the Yellow Emperor. "They [the reformers] see the preservation of religion [*baojiao*] as a handle, so they use the birth of Confucius as the starting date of the calendar; the purpose of our generation is the preservation of the race [*baozhong*], so we use the birth of the Yellow Emperor as a founding date."<sup>15</sup>

The vision of racial grouping elaborated by the revolutionaries fighting for the overthrow of the Qing dynasty is eloquently illustrated by Zou Rong, one of the more influential nationalists, who proudly proclaimed that

When men love their race, solidarity will arise internally, and what is outside will be repelled. Hence, to begin with, lineages were united and other lineages repelled; next, lineages of villages were united and lineages of other villages repelled; next, tribes were united and other tribes were repelled; finally, the people of a country became united, and people of other countries were repelled. This is the general principle of the races of the world, and also a major reason why races engender history. I will demonstrate to my countrymen, to allow them to form their own impression, how our yellow race, the yellow race of which the Han race is part, is able to unite itself and repel intruders.<sup>16</sup>

The revolutionaries constructed a new sense of identity that narrowly focused on the Han race, pictured as a perennial biological unit descended from a mythological ancestor. By 1911, culture, nation and race had become coterminous for many revolutionaries fighting the Qing dynasty.

### *Republican China*

The Qing empire collapsed in 1911, a momentous political event which was marked by a number of important developments, for instance the rapid transformation of the traditional gentry into powerful new elites such as factory managers, bankers, lawyers, doctors, scientists, educators and journalists. Modern science, in the eyes of these elites, came to replace imperial cosmology as a body of legitimate knowledge about the world. Many came to view "race" as a credible concept capable of promoting national unity after the collapse of the empire. Not only was "race" deemed to be an objective, universal and scientifically observable given, but it also fulfilled a unifying role in the politics of the nation: it promoted unity against foreign aggressors and suppressed internal divisions.

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<sup>15</sup> Liu, 1904: 1.

<sup>16</sup> Tsou, 1968: 106.

Even the “peasants with weather-beaten faces and mudcaked hands and feet”<sup>17</sup> could be represented as the descendants of the Yellow Emperor, as “race” was a notion which could overarch gender, lineage, class and region to integrate the country’s people into a powerful community organically linked by blood.

Racial theories did not remain confined to the new elites concerned with the unity of the nation. With the rise of a modern print culture, driven by many private publishing houses and by the general growth in literacy after the fall of the empire, a vernacular press appeared which facilitated the circulation of new forms of group identity. Racial categories of analysis, disseminated by the new print culture, were consolidated by endless references to science.<sup>18</sup> Chen Yucang (1889–1947), director of the Medical College of Tongji University and a secretary to the Legislative Yuan, boldly postulated that the degree of civilization was the only indicator of cranial weight: “If we compare the cranial weights of different people, the civilized are somewhat heavier than the savages, and the Chinese brain is a bit heavier than the European brain.”<sup>19</sup> Liang Boqiang, in an oft-quoted study on the “Chinese race” published in 1926, took the blood’s “index of agglutination” as an indicator of purity, while the absence of body hair came to symbolize a biological boundary of the “Chinese race” for a popular writer like Lin Yutang (1895–1976), who even proclaimed that “on good authority from medical doctors, and from references in writing, one knows that a perfectly bare *mons veneris* is not uncommon in Chinese women.”<sup>20</sup> Archaeologists, on the other hand, sought evidence of human beginnings in China. Like many of his contemporaries, Lin Yan cited the discovery of Beijing Man at Zhoukoudian as evidence that the “Chinese race” had existed on the soil of the Middle Kingdom since the earliest stage of civilization. Excavations supported his hypothesis by demonstrating that migrations had taken place only within the empire. It was concluded that China was inhabited by “the earth’s most ancient original inhabitants.”<sup>21</sup>

Racial theories were also disseminated by means of school textbooks, anthropology exhibitions and travel literature. Print culture even reached the lower levels of education, spreading racial theories via the national

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<sup>17</sup> Tsou, 1968: 72.

<sup>18</sup> This section is based on Dikötter, 1992.

<sup>19</sup> Chen, 1937: 180.

<sup>20</sup> Lin, 1935: 26.

<sup>21</sup> Lin, 1947: 27.

curriculum. The opening sentence of a chapter on “human races” in a 1920 textbook for middle schools declared that “among the world’s races, there are strong and weak constitutions, there are black and white skins, there is hard and soft hair, there are superior and inferior cultures. A rapid overview shows that they are not of the same level.”<sup>22</sup> Even in primary schools, readings on racial politics became part of the curriculum: “Mankind is divided into five races. The yellow and white races are relatively strong and intelligent. Because the other races are feeble and stupid, they are being exterminated by the white race. Only the yellow race competes with the white race. This is so-called evolution [...] Among the contemporary races that could be called superior, there are only the yellow and the white races. China is the yellow race.”<sup>23</sup> Although it is clear that individual writers, political groups and academic institutions had different ideas about the meanings of physical features, many modern-educated people in China had come to identify themselves and others in terms of “race” by the end of the Republican period.

Only a few isolated voices in republican China openly contested the existence of a racial taxonomy in mankind. Zhang Junmai, for instance, wisely excluded “common blood” from his definition of the nation. Qi Sihe also criticized the use of racial categories of analysis in China, and pointed out how “race” was a declining notion in the West. Generally, however, racial discourse cut across most political positions, from the fascist core of the Guomindang to the communist theories of Li Dazhao. Its fundamental role in promoting nationalism, its powerful appeal to a sense of belonging based on presumed links of blood, its authoritative worldview in which cultural differences could be explained in terms of stable biological laws, all these aspects provided racial discourse with a singular resilience: it shaped the identity of millions of people in Republican China, as it had done for people in Europe and the United States.

Racial classifications between different population groups were so important that they often preceded and shaped real social encounters. The poet Wen Yiduo, for instance, sailed for the United States in 1922, but even on board his courage ebbed away as he felt increasingly apprehensive of racial discrimination in the West. In America he felt lonely and homesick: he described himself as the “Exiled Prisoner.” Wen Yiduo wrote home: “For a thoughtful young Chinese, the taste of life here in America is beyond description. When I return home for New Year, the year after next,

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<sup>22</sup> Fu, 1914: 9–15.

<sup>23</sup> Wiegner, 1921: 180, original Chinese text.

I shall talk with you around the fire, I shall weep bitterly and shed tears to give vent to all the accumulated indignation. I have a nation, I have a history and a culture of five thousand years: how can this be inferior to the Americans?"<sup>24</sup> His resentment against "the West" cumulated in a poem entitled "I am Chinese":

I am Chinese, I am Chinese,  
I am the divine blood of the Yellow Emperor,  
I came from the highest place in the world,  
Pamir is my ancestral place,  
My race is like the Yellow River,  
We flow down the Kunlun mountain slope,  
We flow across the Asian continent,  
From us have flown exquisite customs.  
Mighty nation! Mighty nation!<sup>25</sup>

It is undeniable that some Chinese students genuinely suffered from racial discrimination abroad, although an element of self-victimization and self-humiliation undoubtedly entered into the composition of such feelings. More importantly, however, they often interpreted their social encounters abroad from a cultural repertoire which reinforced the racialization of others. Even social experiences that had the potential to destabilize their sense of identity were appropriated and integrated into a racial frame of reference. Pan Guangdan, the most outspoken proponent of eugenics in China, expressed his disappointment with the unwillingness of a book entitled *The American Negro*, edited by Donald Young in 1928, to speak in terms of racial inequality:

But to be true to observable facts, in any given period of time sufficiently long for selection to take effect, races as groups are different, unequal, and there is no reason except one based upon sentiment why we cannot refer to them in terms of inferiority and superiority, when facts warrant us. It is to be suspected that the Jewish scholars, themselves belonging to a racial group which has long been unjustly discriminated against, have unwittingly developed among themselves a defensive mechanism which is influencing their judgements on racial questions. The reviewer recalls with regret that during his student days [in the United States] he had estranged some of his best Jewish friends for his candid views on the point of racial inequality.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Wen, 1968, I: 40.

<sup>25</sup> Wen, 1925: 136–7.

<sup>26</sup> Pan, 1930: 838.

*Contemporary China*

Racial theories were attacked as tools of imperialism following the communist takeover in 1949,<sup>27</sup> and university departments in such fields as genetics and anthropology were subsequently closed, for political reasons, in the early 1950s. Anthropologists, for instance, were accused of having used disrespectful anthropometric methods that insulted the minority nationalities. While the CCP appealed to the notion of “class” as a unifying concept, it did not abandon the politically vital distinction between a Han majority on the one hand and a range of minorities on the other. Not only did the CCP perpetuate the generic representation of linguistically and culturally diverse people in China as a homogeneous group called Han *minzu*, but they also swiftly proceeded to officially recognize 41 so-called “minority nationalities” [*shaoshu minzu*] who applied for nationality recognition after the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949, a number which increased to 56 by the time of the 1982 census.

As the political boundaries of the country recognized by the CCP corresponded largely to those of the Qing empire, minority people in the strategically and economically vital border regions of Xinjiang and Tibet continued to be portrayed as both organically linked yet politically subordinate to the Han. Although the idea of equality between different *minzu* was promoted by the CCP in order to combat “Han chauvinism” [*Da Han minzuzhuyi*], the representation of the Han as an absolute majority endowed with superior political and cultural attributes and hence destined to be the vanguard of the revolution and the forefront of economic development dominated official discourse during the Maoist period. In a manner recalling the racial taxonomies used by the revolutionaries at the beginning of the twentieth century, “minority nationalities” were represented as less evolved branches of people who needed the moral and political guidance of the Han in order to ascend on the scales of civilization. The idea of the Han as a politically more advanced and better endowed *minzu* pervaded the early decades of the communist regime, while assimilationist policies were also eagerly pursued. “Han” and “Chinese,” in other words, were not only seen to overlap, but “minorities” continue to be portrayed as mere sub-branches of a broader organic web destined to fuse into a single nation.

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<sup>27</sup> Ubukata, 1953.

The emphasis on class struggle at the expense of economic development was reversed after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. After the ascent to power of Deng Xiaoping in 1978, the language of science gradually started to replace communist ideology in a number of politically sensitive domains. Palaeoanthropological research illustrates how the assimilationist vision was reinvigorated by scientific research in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>28</sup> Prominent researchers represented Beijing Man at Zhoukoudian as the “ancestor” of the “Mongoloid race” [*Menggu renzhong*]. A great number of hominid teeth, skull fragments and fossil apes, discovered at different sites scattered over China since 1949, were used to support the view that the “yellow race” [*huangzhong*] was in a direct line of descent from its hominid ancestor in China. Although palaeoanthropologists in China acknowledged that the fossil evidence pointed to Africa as the birthplace of mankind, highly regarded researchers like Jia Lanpo repeatedly emphasized that man’s real place of origin should be located in East Asia. Wu Rukang, also one of the most respected palaeoanthropologists in China, came very close to upholding a polygenesist thesis (the idea that mankind has different origins) in mapping different geographical spaces for the “yellow race” (China), the “black race” (Africa) and the “white race” (Europe): “The fossils of homo sapiens discovered in China all prominently display the characteristics of the yellow race (...) pointing at the continuous nature between them, the yellow race and contemporary Chinese people.”<sup>29</sup>

Early hominids present in China since the early Middle Pleistocene (one million years ago) were believed to be the origin back to which all the population groups in the People’s Republic can be traced. Physical anthropologists also invoked detailed craniological examinations to provide “irrefutable evidence” about a continuity in development between early hominids and the “modern Mongoloid race.” Detailed studies of prehistoric fossil bones were carried out to represent the nation’s racial past as characterized by the gradual emergence of a Han “majority” into which different “minorities” would have merged. As one close observer has noted, “In the West, scientists treat the Chinese fossil evidence as part of the broad picture of human evolution world-wide; in China, it is part of national history—an ancient and fragmentary part, it is true, but none

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<sup>28</sup> The following two paragraphs draw on Dikötter, 1998.

<sup>29</sup> Wu, 1989: 205–6.



the less one that is called upon to promote a unifying concept of unique origin and continuity within the Chinese nation.”<sup>30</sup>

These theories have not changed substantially with more recent advances in palaeoanthropology. Every new discovery in China, it seems, is jumped upon to question the “Out of Africa” thesis. When an ancient skull was dug up in Henan in 2008, it was widely interpreted as evidence that most of the people living in China were descendants of a native lineage whose uninterrupted evolution could be traced back millions of years.<sup>31</sup>

Serological studies were also carried out in the 1980s to highlight the biological proximity of all minorities to the Han. Mainly initiated by Professor Zhao Tongmao, estimations of genetic distance based on gene frequency claimed that the racial differences between population groups living within China—including Tibetans, Mongols and Uighurs—were comparatively small. Serologists also observed that the “Negroid race” and the “Caucasian race” were more closely related to each other than to the “Mongoloid race.” Zhao Tongmao put the Han at the very center of his chart, which branched out gradually to include other minority groups from China in a tree highlighting the genetic distance between “yellows” on the one hand and “whites” and “blacks” on the other. The author hypothesized that the genetic differences within the “yellow race” can be divided into a “northern” and a “southern” variation, which might even have different “origins.” His conclusion underlined that the Han were the main branch of the “yellow race” in China to which all the minority groups could be traced: the political boundaries of the People’s Republic, in other words, appeared to be founded on clear biological markers of genetic distance.

In similar vein, skulls, hair, eyes, noses, ears, entire bodies and even the penises of thousands of subjects are, to this day, routinely measured, weighed and assessed by anthropometrists who attempt to identify the “special characteristics” [*tezhen*] of minority people. As a theory of common descent is advanced by scientific knowledge, the dominant Han are represented as the core of a “yellow race” which encompasses in its margins all the national minorities. Within both scientific institutions and government circles, different population groups in China are increasingly represented as one relatively homogeneous descent group with a unique origin and uninterrupted line of descent which can be traced back to the Yellow Emperor. Contemporary China, in short, is not so much a

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<sup>30</sup> Reader, 1990: 111.

<sup>31</sup> Chen, 2008: 4.

“civilization pretending to be a state,” in the words of Lucien Pye, but rather an empire claiming to be a race.<sup>32</sup>

### *Racial Nationalism*

Racial theories are less visible in China today than before World War II. Like everywhere else, they have undergone a decline in respectability, although occasionally racial nationalism is still expressed in a fairly unambivalent way, for instance during the 1988–9 riots against African students on university campuses. In a series of incidents thousands of Chinese students, fuelled by a variety of racist rumors, set about assaulting and destroying the dormitories of African students in Nanjing, Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin, shouting “Kill the black devils!”<sup>33</sup> Six months after their mass demonstrations against Africans, alleged to have molested Chinese women, the same students were occupying Tiananmen Square in the name of the nation.

Besides student demonstrators, even opponents of the regime have occasionally been eager to deploy the notion of race as a unifying concept against the threat of “Western culture.” To take but one example, Yuan Hongbing, a lawyer at Beijing University who was briefly detained in February 1994 and became a well-known figure in the public dissident movement, called for a “new heroicism” in order to save “the fate of the race” and for a “totalitarian” regime which would “fuse the weak, ignorant and selfish individuals of the race into a powerful whole.”<sup>34</sup> According to Yuan, only purification through blood and fire would provide a solution to China’s problems: “On the battlefield of racial competition the most moving clarion call is the concept of racial superiority... Only the fresh blood of others can prove the strength of one race.”<sup>35</sup> Such voices, however, remain marginal, and it would be wrong to misinterpret the intense nationalism which has characterized the reform era as being exclusively “racial.”

On the other hand, the rise of the internet has given a far more prominent voice to popular expressions of racism. Liu Xiaobo—one of the student leaders during the Tiananmen pro-democracy movement, a

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<sup>32</sup> Pye, 1994.

<sup>33</sup> Sullivan, 1994.

<sup>34</sup> Barmé, 1995.

<sup>35</sup> Barmé, 1995.

prominent dissident and Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2010—discovered just how deep racism runs when he surveyed the web after a visit to China by Condoleezza Rice in 2005. In hundreds of rants reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution, popular websites attacked the United States Secretary of State as a “black pig,” a “black devil” or a “black female dog.” Liu noted that the racism he discovered on the web was so widespread that few readers in China were bothered by it.<sup>36</sup> More recently, a similar outpouring of racial hatred marked the appearance in a talent show of Lou Jing, who has a Shanghainese mother and an African-American father who left China before her birth. Some of the blogs, which demeaned her with racist slurs and demands that she leave the country, attracted tens of thousands of hits.

### *Conclusion*

The term “Chinese,” whether referring restrictively only to the Han or more inclusively to the people of China, is a generic category comparable to the Victorian notion of “Anglo-Saxon”: it is assumed to be a race, a language and a culture, even when its members are dispersed across the globe. Symptomatic of this phenomenon is the inclusion of Taiwan in most discussions of China, despite the radically different history, politics, cultures and languages of the island-nation. This is roughly comparable to there being a contemporary textbook on England that expatiated on Australia, or a German textbook demanding a merger with Austria on the basis of “race.” Not only is it assumed that “Chinese” is a shared language by most inhabitants of “Greater China,” despite ample evidence to the contrary, but also that all the “Chinese” are linked by virtue of descent.

Racial theories have underpinned nationalism in China since 1895. Precisely because of the extreme diversity of religious practices, family structures, spoken languages and regional cultures of population groups that have been defined as “Chinese,” the notion of race have emerged as very powerful and cohesive form of identity. Racial theories have been used by the late Qing reformers, the anti-Manchu revolutionaries, the Guomindang nationalists, and, more recently, by a number of educated circles in the People’s Republic. The notion of race, while heavily dependent on the language of science, has undergone many changes since the end of the

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<sup>36</sup> Tatlow, 2005: A1.

nineteenth century. Its flexibility is part of its enduring appeal, as it constantly adapts to different political and social contexts, from the reformist movement in the 1890s to the policies of the Chinese Communist Party. It is not suggested here that “race” was the only significant form of identity available in China, but that notions of culture, ethnicity and race have often been conflated in the politics of nationalism.

Since the erosion of communist authority after the Tiananmen massacre in 1989, nationalist sentiments have found a wider audience both within state circles and relatively independent intellectual spheres. Intense nationalism arising in a potentially unstable country with an embattled Communist Party could have important consequences for regional security in that vital part of the world. Racial nationalism portrays frontier countries, from Taiwan to Tibet, as “organic” parts of the sacred territory of the descendants of the Yellow Emperor that should be defended by military force if necessary. In contrast, multiple identities, free choice of citizenship and ambiguity in group membership are unlikely to appeal to a one-party state in charge of an empire.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### RACIST SOUTH KOREA? DIVERSE BUT NOT TOLERANT OF DIVERSITY<sup>1</sup>

Gi-Wook Shin

“Our ethnic homogeneity is a blessing,” a South Korean worker says casually and without hesitation in an interview with *The New York Times* in November 2009.<sup>2</sup> In Korea, it is not unusual to express one’s pride and one’s feelings of cultural distinctiveness and superiority for being a rare example of an ethnically homogenous nation. The great majority of Koreans would agree that their society is defined by a unique “Korean” identity—an identity based on a sense of shared bloodline and common ancestry—and feel proud of the racial purity and ethnic homogeneity of their nation. Although both North and South Korea have promoted ethnic nationalism, this chapter deals with the South.

Revealingly, in a recent survey conducted by Korea University, respondents gave an average score of 3.77 on a five-point scale (5 being “strongly agree”) to the statement “I am proud of having long maintained a racially homogeneous nation.”<sup>3</sup> While others might see it as an exceptionally rigid and narrow conceptualization of national identity, Koreans have been taught, through decades of mandatory national history and citizens’ ethics education to take a positive view of the ethnic unity of their fatherland. Until recently, statements such as “Korea is a racially homogeneous nation” and “Korea uniquely maintains the tradition of a racially homogeneous nation” regularly appeared in national textbooks,<sup>4</sup> indoctrinating Koreans into a kind of ethnic monotheism and leaving little room for the acceptance of social heterogeneity.

In fact, Korea is widely regarded as being among the most ethnically and linguistically homogeneous countries in the world. Traditionally, purity of

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<sup>2</sup> Choe, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Yoon et al., 2010: 114.

<sup>4</sup> Hwang, 2009.

blood and ethnic homogeneity were at the core of the dominant notions of national identity and were furthermore a source of national pride. At times, the Korean government has gone so far as to impose various legal measures restricting immigration into Korea for this reason. However, while ethnic unity remains a defining feature of Korean nationalism and national identity, contemporary Korean society has begun to depart significantly and perhaps irreversibly from the long sought-after ideal of an ethnically homogenous society. Today's South Korea is perceived by many migrant workers as a "land of opportunity." As of September 2011, the number of foreigners residing in Korea—most of them migrant workers—exceeded 1.4 million, accounting for nearly three percent of the nation's entire population.<sup>5</sup> This figure may seem slight compared to that of other countries such as the United States, but it has significant implications for Korea. With the persistent and ever-growing influx of migrant workers and international brides, the Korean people are now more exposed than ever to racial and cultural diversity. However, this substantial enlargement of the foreign population has not been proportional to the Korean public's tolerance of and openness to non-Korean cultures and values. In the midst of rapidly broadening diversity, notions of ethnic homogeneity and an exclusionary national identity have become serious problems for Korea, since they have driven discrimination and prejudice toward those not considered "pure" Koreans. However, most Koreans seem unaware of the potential danger that their deeply rooted ethnic pride and sense of superiority could pose to the emerging global society.

Today's Korea shows that even when a society becomes diverse, it does not necessarily become tolerant of diversity. In other words, Korea has yet to become a multi-cultural society while it has, essentially, become a multi-ethnic nation. The transformation of Korea into a multi-ethnic society is by now irreversible, but many Koreans continue to exhibit prejudice against foreigners and Koreans of "mixed blood." The key issue facing Korean society, then, is its ability to not only recognize and tolerate the reality of increasing ethnic heterogeneity—that is, to tame the racist modes of thought implicit in ethnic nationalism—but to accept and respect ethnic and cultural pluralism. It is important to consider the various ways in which Koreans might successfully adapt to their nation's rapidly emerging multi-ethnic and multicultural society, as well as to isolate some of the major causes and attributes of Korean racism. To this end, this

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<sup>5</sup> Lee, 2010.

chapter will examine how Korean racism has been justified, strengthened, and practiced in the name of national unity. It will also closely examine the Korean government's immigration and foreign resident policies in order to argue that what the government claims to be "multicultural policies" [*tamunhwa chŏngch'aek*] have in fact been policies that promote assimilation. I will then conclude and argue that despite its status as a multi-ethnic society, Korea has yet to achieve the important task of coming to terms with immigration and multiculturalism.

*The Nexus of Korean Ethnic Nationalism and Racism*

It is not uncommon to find racist elements implicit in modern nationalism. In the nineteenth century, George Mosse argued that "Racism was dependent upon nationalism, and it was through nationalism that racism was able to transform theory into practice."<sup>6</sup> In the twentieth and twenty first centuries, Korea has shown that there remains a strong, if not indispensable, link between nationalism and racism. Originally an anti-imperialist and anti-colonial ideology, Korean nationalism has long fostered ethnic unity among Koreans based on shared ancestry and blood: Korea was "racialized" by a belief in a common prehistoric origin, a belief which produced intense feelings of national unity. However, Korea's brand of ethnic nationalism has also served to legitimize prejudice and hostility toward foreigners. A substantial conceptual overlap exists in the country at the race, ethnicity, and nation levels. Ethnicity is generally regarded as a cultural phenomenon that grounds itself in a common language and history; race, as a collectivity defined by innate and immutable phenotypic and genotypic characteristics. But Koreans have not distinguished between these notions. Instead, race has served as a marker that strengthens ethnic identity, and ethnic identity, in turn, has been instrumental in defining the Korean nation. Koreans thus regarded their identity as being "immutable" or "primordial" through an imagined conception of "Korean blood" [*hyŏlt'ong*] and thought of themselves as belonging to a "unitary nation" [*tanil minjok*] that was ethnically homogeneous and racially unique.

Historically, the notion of *tanil minjok* was developed and intensified in the context of Japanese imperialism.<sup>7</sup> In Western Europe, nationalism

<sup>6</sup> Mosse, 1995: 165.

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the historical development of Korean ethnic nationalism, see Shin, G., 2006.



arose as an ideology for integrating diverse ethnic groups into unified political communities called nation-states. In contrast, for Korea, with its nearly 1,000 years of political, linguistic, and geographical continuity, unification was a less urgent problem than the threat of imperialism. It was particularly more important for Koreans to assert the distinctiveness of the Korean nation and demonstrate its capacity to effectively confront the foreign (Japanese) challenge. Accordingly, early Korean nationalists (re)invented the Tan'gun myth, which naturalized the Korean nation. While it is misleading to regard the Korean nation as natural or given, Korea since the Koryo dynasty (circa late tenth century) may lay claim to what Anthony Smith would call an "ethnic core" on top of a territorially consistent political community.<sup>8</sup> The nation was defined as "an organic body formed out of the spirit of a people... descended through a single pure bloodline"<sup>9</sup> that would persevere even after the loss of political sovereignty. The Koreans were thus considered racially distinct from the Chinese, Japanese, and all other Asians.

Japanese colonial policy had the consequence of further "racializing" the Korean notion of nation. Confronted with the misfortune of colonization and unable to recover their political sovereignty, Korean nationalists turned to the task of "asserting the greatness of Korea's cultural heritage" through a quest for Korea's historical origins. Even Marxists could not dispute the naturalness of the Korean ethnic nation, since questioning it would have been tantamount to denying *Koreanness* in the face of an imperial challenge by an alien (Japanese) ethnic nation. This project of asserting the ethnic distinctiveness and purity of the Korean race became all the more important as Japan attempted to assimilate Koreans into its empire as "imperial subjects" under the policies of *naisen yūwa* [fusion of Japanese and Koreans] and *naisen ittai* [Japanese and Koreans as one body]. The policies were based on *nissen dōsoron*, which maintained that Koreans and Japanese arose from a common origin but that the Koreans had always occupied a position subordinate to the Japanese from ancient times onward. Japan also initiated the *kōminka* [making imperial subjects] movement, which forced Koreans to change their names into Japanese names, use only the Japanese language and worship Shinto. However, the Japanese assimilation policy provoked strong resentment and resistance from many Koreans, and the ethno-cultural differences

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<sup>8</sup> Smith, 1991: 39.

<sup>9</sup> Sin, 1982: 160–161. Also see Shin, G., 2006b: 38.

between the two nations came to be more sharply perceived. Defining a nation as an “eternal being,” for instance, Korean nationalists argued that *hyölt’ong* [bloodline], *sönggyök* [personality], and *munhwa* [culture] were the three fundamental elements of a nation and that “Koreans are without a doubt a unitary nation [*tanil han minjok*] in blood and culture.” The Japanese assimilation policy, therefore, did not eradicate or even weaken national consciousness among Koreans. On the contrary—it reinforced the conviction that they possessed a truly distinctive and homogenous ethnic identity.

Following colonial rule, the peninsula was divided and two separate regimes emerged in Korea. And yet ethnicity as shared locus of social identification remained firm. On the surface, North and South Korea appear to have opposing ideologies and political systems (communist and capitalist, respectively), and competed fiercely with each other to claim the legitimate center of the Korean national community. However, careful examination reveals a great deal of resemblance in their view of the Korean nation and their respective uses of nationalism in politics. As before, the nationalism that appeared in both Koreas was ethnic and collectivistic: their national identity was still founded on race, blood and ethnicity in lieu of the adoption of a more inclusive notion of citizenship. Unlike in Germany, where a similarly strong ethnic nationalism was discredited after 1945 due to its links to Nazism, Korean ethnic nationalism, which developed as an anti-colonial ideology became a highly valuable resource in mobilizing people in pursuit of political agendas in both Koreas.

It is no surprise, then, that citizenship has been based on racial and ethnic conceptions of nationhood. As Katharine Moon argues, the current status and treatment of foreign workers in Korea is inherently related to the idea of nation and qualifications for citizenship.<sup>10</sup> While the principle of bloodline, or *jus sanguinis*, continues to inform Koreans’ understanding of nationhood and citizenship—two concepts that, again, are closely associated in the mind of Koreans, this conception is extremely narrow in that even the children of international marriages, who retain at least 50 percent Korean blood, often face discrimination in Korean society. Social institutions that could address issues of discrimination against ethnic non-Koreans—e.g., the ethnic Chinese known as *hwagyo* in Korea—have for the most part proved ineffectual, since a “pure-blooded” national identity has become a powerful force in politics, culture, and

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<sup>10</sup> Moon, 2010.

society. This notion of national identity has hindered social and cultural diversity and tolerance in Korean society, and legitimized the government's "closed-door" immigration policy until the late 1980s.

### *Influx of Migrant Labor and Foreign Brides*

Korea was a labor-exporting country until the late 1980s, sending more than 30,000 workers abroad each year during the earlier part of the decade, most notably to Germany and the Middle East in order to become miners, nurses and construction workers. During this time, Korea had virtually no immigration policy, generally keeping its doors closed to immigrants. Beginning in the mid-1980s, however, Korea experienced a labor shortage due to the exhaustion of its rural labor surplus and the declining participation rate of young adults in the work force as a result of longer schooling.<sup>11</sup> The sudden influx of migrant workers in 1990s came in response to this shortage of necessary labor for low-paying and less prestigious jobs, as wealthier and better-educated Koreans began to show a reluctance to engage in so-called "3D" jobs (Dirty, Difficult, Dangerous). As such, Korea was forced to face the reality that it could no longer be self-sufficient in the labor market. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the South Korean government responded to intensifying labor shortage problems and a growing demand for cheap labor by introducing the Industrial Trainee System (ITS), and thereby moving from its long-held closed-door policy to one that was at least partially open.<sup>12</sup> The government began to systematically coordinate policies that were intended to bring in and control the inflow of migrant workers. In 2007, less than two decades after Korea officially opened its doors—first to temporary workers, then to permanent workers—the United Nations declared Korea a receiving country.<sup>13</sup> As Figure 1 demonstrates, it was estimated that 599,422 foreign workers including undocumented workers resided in Korea in 2011.

Another increasingly important source of ethnic diversity in Korea comes from the significant increase in international marriages. Another shortage—this time a shortage of "marriageable women" for certain

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<sup>11</sup> Kim, A.E., 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Kim, 2004: 327.

<sup>13</sup> Wikipedia. *Immigration Policy of Korea*, 2009.



Fig. 15.1. Number of foreign workers in South Korea, 1990–2011.<sup>14</sup>

groups of Korean men, specifically those in rural areas of low socioeconomic status—has ushered in a new trend of international marriages. These international marriages have led to the immigration of an average of 28,000 women per year, most of whom come from developing Asian countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines and China. The proportion of international marriages in Korea has jumped more than tenfold since 1990 to a cumulative total of 146,508 at the end of 2007, accounting for nearly 14 percent of all marriages in Korea and 40 percent of marriages among men working in agriculture in 2007.<sup>15</sup> As Fig. 15.1 shows, foreign wives began to dramatically outnumber foreign husbands in the mid-1990s and the trend has only intensified since then. Before the 1990s, international marriages were considered uncommon; they generally occurred between South Korean women working in U.S. military camps and American soldiers. At that time, international marriages had not gained public acceptance and the women marrying U.S. servicemen were looked down on as “social outcasts” who had contaminated the purity of “Korean blood.” The importation of foreign brides in the mid-1990s came as a direct response to the lack of young women in rural areas as a result of rapid industrialization and better education which drew women to cities. The number of

<sup>14</sup> Sources: Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Korea (2001–2011).

<sup>15</sup> Korean Immigration Service, 2009: 45. This figure also includes Korean men engaged in fishing.

foreign brides is expected to climb over the next decade or so, in large part due to the continuing acute shortage of native Korean women that is due to the preference for sons that prevailed in Korea in the 1970s and 1980s, one which brought about a serious imbalance in the male-female ratio. Despite Korea's highly ethnocentric national identity, this boom in international marriages is often cited as a means by which Korea might solve several problems at once,<sup>16</sup> including the labor shortage and the imbalance in the male-female ratio as well as the country's low birth rate.

Year	Total Marriages	International Marriages	% of Total	Foreign Wives	Foreign Husbands
1990	399,312	4,710	1.2	619	4,091
1991	416,872	5,012	1.2	663	4,349
1992	419,774	5,534	1.3	2,057	3,477
1993	402,593	6,545	1.6	3,109	3,436
1994	393,121	6,616	1.7	3,072	3,544
1995	398,484	13,494	3.4	10,365	3,129
1996	434,911	15,946	3.7	12,647	3,299
1997	388,591	12,448	3.2	9,266	3,182
1998	375,616	12,188	3.2	8,054	4,134
1999	362,673	10,570	2.9	5,775	4,795
2000	332,090	12,319	3.5	7,304	5,015
2001	318,407	15,234	4.6	10,006	5,228
2002	304,877	15,913	5.0	11,017	4,896
2003	302,503	25,658	8.2	19,214	6,444
2004	308,598	35,447	11.2	25,594	9,853
2005	314,304	43,121	13.5	31,180	11,941
2006	330,634	39,690	11.7	30,208	9,482
2007	343,559	38,491	10.9	28,580	8,980
2008	327,715	36,204	11.0	28,163	8,041
2009	309,759	33,300	10.8	25,142	8,158
2010	326,104	34,235	10.5	26,274	7,961
2011	329,087	29,762	9	22,265	7,497

Fig. 15.2. Number of international marriages, 1990–2010.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Kim, N., 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Source: Korean Statistical Informational Service (various years).

The rising number of bi-racial or bi-ethnic children from international marriages also contributes to the ethnic diversity of Korea. According to the Korean Immigration Service, at least 51,918 “multi-ethnic children” lived in South Korea in 2008, with an additional 5,845 undocumented children.<sup>18</sup> Among the children of international marriages, the most numerous are *Kosians*—bi-ethnic children of Koreans and their Asian-heritage spouses. According to one *Joong Ang Daily* article, it is estimated that nearly a third of all children born in 2020 will be *Kosians*, and that by then their accumulated total will soar to 3.3 percent of the population.<sup>19</sup> The Korean government projects that the proportion of foreign residents in Korea will rise to 5 percent by 2020.<sup>20</sup> Korea’s recorded birth rate of 0.89, the world’s lowest for two consecutive years,<sup>21</sup> in conjunction with a persistent imbalance in the country’s male-female ratio will in all likelihood continue to act as “pull factors” for migrant workers and foreign brides.

### *Korea’s Multicultural Policies*

The emergence of such a multi-ethnic society was not anticipated by the Korean government in the early stages of its search for foreign workers and foreign brides. The ITS, introduced during the early periods of Korea’s importation of foreign workers, closely resembled Germany’s “guest-worker” program, which began as a government-organized recruitment system in the late 1950s and early 1960s that aimed to temporarily “borrow” excess workers from other countries. Foreign laborers who came as guest workers were not equal citizens according to law and experienced circumstances that were very different from those experienced by German workers with regard to pay, working conditions and status. Since the 1990s, Japan too has maintained an unacknowledged backdoor “guest worker” program, despite an express policy against importing unskilled foreign labor in order to alleviate a growing industrial labor shortage. As the Japanese government restricted the entry of foreign workers to those with student, trainee, researcher, intern and entertainer visas, this “guest worker” program was instead presented as a form of “Overseas Development Assistance” and as a technological transfer that would ostensibly

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<sup>18</sup> Song, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Lee, et al. 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Kang, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Rahn, 2009.

offer foreign workers the opportunity to work and be trained in Japan and then sent home again after a few years with skills that would benefit their home countries.<sup>22</sup> It would thus pose no threat to the domestic labor market since their employment would be confined to sectors experiencing labor shortages.

Similarly, those who came to Korea as “temporary trainees” under the ITS were expected to help relieve the country’s labor shortages when required and then to leave the country after a specified period of time. For this reason, the Korean government limited the entry of foreign workers’ spouses and children into the country, toughened the immigration process and restricted these workers’ naturalization options. In addition, the workers often received low wages and encountered exploitative practices and human rights abuses. Despite being labeled as “trainees,” these workers functioned as low-wage workers who engaged in the less desirable jobs that Koreans turned away from. Employers frequently took advantage of the fact that as long as their standards were based on the conditions in the workers’ home countries, these “temporary trainees”—most of whom came from poor Asian and South Asian countries—were likely to be willing to work for a lower pay than that which Koreans might demand. Furthermore, according to a 2002 report issued by the Prime Minister’s Office, 90 percent of foreign workers in Korea were unskilled laborers and 80 percent of them were illegal workers, many of whom had deserted their original workplaces and remained in the country after their ITS periods had expired.<sup>23</sup> These workers have been “easy targets” for the delayed payment of wages and compensation, poor and unsafe working conditions and even physical violence and verbal harassment by their employers. They typically have no insurance, no job security, and no compensation in the event of an industrial accident. Moreover, these workers were not entitled to basic workers’ rights under the Labor Standards Law and Social Insurance System until the South Korean government extended the law to foreign workers at the end of 2001.<sup>24</sup> And yet, despite the reported hardships and mistreatment of foreign laborers, the migrant worker population continued to grow rapidly at the turn of the twenty first century and came to occupy a central place in the national economy (see Fig. 15.3).

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<sup>22</sup> Arudou, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Kim, 2004: 321.

<sup>24</sup> Kim, 2004: 326.





Fig. 15.3. The number of foreign workers by employment type, 2001–2011.<sup>25</sup>

Like migrant workers, foreign brides and the bi-racial or bi-ethnic children of international marriages continue to face and are often threatened by societal discrimination and human rights abuses. Human rights abuses suffered by foreign brides are generally thought to arise from misunderstandings caused by the linguistic and cultural differences between the Korean husbands and their foreign brides. However, it is worth noting that most international marriages are initiated by specialized brokerage agencies, many of which are illegal, and that marriages set up by these unlicensed illegal agencies largely involve an exchange of money—that is, the Korean men pay money to the brides’ families in advance of the marriage. This explains a number of the problems in these marriages: some Korean husbands come to regard their wives as purchased commodities and mistreat the women they had “bought.”<sup>26</sup> Stories of physically and verbally abused wives are neither new nor surprising to many foreign women married to South Korean men.

The children of international marriages are also facing racial discrimination, even though the law accepts them as Korean citizens and despite the fact that they retain 50 percent Korean blood. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, 17.6 percent of the multi-ethnic children had reported that they had been bullied because of their

<sup>25</sup> Sources: Ministry of Justice, the Republic of Korea (2001–2011).

<sup>26</sup> Hicap, 2009.

non-Korean appearance and their mixed-race status.<sup>27</sup> This, along with other factors such as the mothers' lack of Korean-language proficiency which prevents them from fulfilling the socially expected role of guiding their children through the nation's high-pressure education system has led to the unusually high drop-out rate of mixed-background children from elementary school, which is currently 15.4 percent—22 times the national average.<sup>28</sup> Considering that the number of mixed-race children continues to increase rapidly, and is estimated to be as high as 49 percent of all children in rural areas by 2020<sup>29</sup> according to the Ministry of Agriculture, this issue can no longer be said to belong in the domestic sphere beyond the realm of government involvement.

Generally speaking, the Korean government currently has a better realization that the poor treatment of migrant workers, foreign brides and multi-ethnic children could escalate from a national problem into one that might provoke diplomatic tension between Korea and the 'sending' countries. Seeing that international marriages have created social problems such as domestic violence and sex trafficking, some South Asian countries, such as Vietnam and Cambodia, have imposed restrictions on marriages between their nationals and Korean men.<sup>30</sup> That international marriages are not merely *personal* issues was clearly evident when the recent murder of a Vietnamese bride by her mentally ill Korean husband ignited considerable tension between Korea and Vietnam to the point that the South Korean foreign minister flew to Vietnam for an inter-ministerial meeting and officially apologized to the Vietnamese foreign minister on behalf of the Korean government.<sup>31</sup>

Concerns about foreign workers' rights and racial discrimination in Korea have generally been firing up within minority groups and NGOs in and out of Korea since the mid-1990s. Since the mid-2000s the Korean government had in fact begun to recognize that addressing issues concerning the human rights of foreign workers was no longer an option but rather a necessity for Korea in a globalized world. The media have also helped to acknowledge the country's loss of homogeneity and its move toward multiculturalism. Fig. 15.4 shows the frequency with which the word "multiculturalism" was used in major Korean newspapers. Its usage

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<sup>27</sup> Kwon, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Fackler, 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Fackler, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Kang, H., 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Kang, H., 2010.

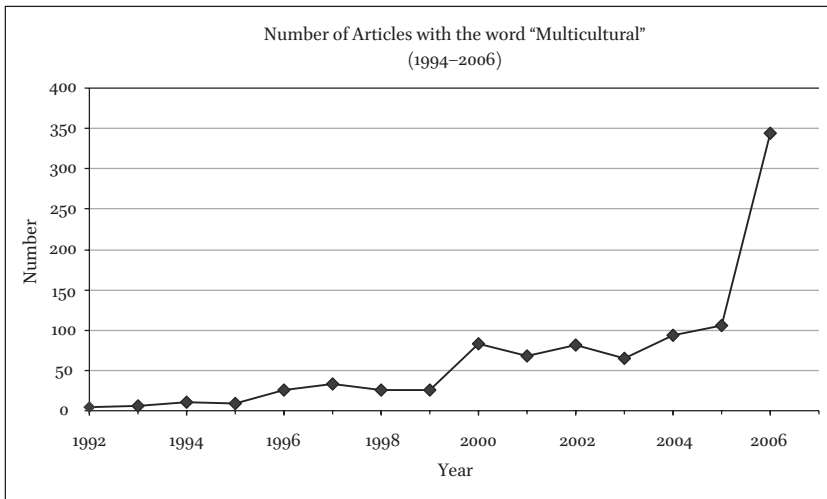


Fig. 15.4. Number of articles including the word “multicultural” in major South Korean newspapers, 1992–2006.<sup>32</sup>

has steadily increased since the start of twenty-first century and jumped considerably in 2006 following the Korean government’s official recognition of the concept of *multiculturalism* in 2005.

In 2001, while still in the initial stages of developing its well-intentioned policies toward foreigners, the South Korean government made an effort to enact the Labor Standards Law after more than a decade of intentionally or unintentionally ignoring ITS-related problems, offering pension benefits and partial health insurance to foreign workers.<sup>33</sup> In 2003, the government replaced the ITS with the Employment Permit System (EPS) in order to further protect migrant workers from exploitative practices. Unlike the ITS, the EPS legally acknowledged migrant workers as being “workers and not “trainees,” and Korea became one of the first Asian countries to guarantee the rights of migrant workers and grant them the same status as Korean workers, with equal labor rights, pay, and benefits.

In 2005, the government officially adopted the concept of *multiculturalism* and established a wide range of multicultural institutes, policies and practices, including the Committee for Foreigner Policy chaired by the

<sup>32</sup> Source: Ahn, 2007: 41. Analysis of nine nation-wide newspapers published in Seoul, such as *Donga*, *Naeil*, *Munhwa*, *Kyunghyang*, *Hangyoreh*, *Seoul*, *Sekye*, *Kookmin*, and *Hankook*.

<sup>33</sup> Kim, 2004: 327.

Prime Minister.<sup>34</sup> However, these developments were designed to support one group in particular—families in which one of the parents was foreign. The Korean government had four goals in mind for these support policies: to help “marriage immigrants” settle successfully and find employment at an early stage, to provide financial assistance for migrants, to aid multicultural families in raising healthy children in order to increase future global human resources, and to raise awareness of multiculturalism in Korean society.<sup>35</sup> “The Multicultural Families Support Act” was adopted in 2008, building upon the 2005 policies in a systematic way that would present multicultural families with welfare benefits such as medical care, schooling, opportunities for cultural and leisure activities and access to social networks.<sup>36</sup> As early as April 2006, the government had granted legal status to people of mixed-race backgrounds and to their families “as part of measures meant for eradicating prejudices and discrimination against” these groups.<sup>37</sup> Universities were required to admit a certain number of “mixed-race” students, for example, and special programs were proposed with a view to providing educational assistance, legal and financial aid and employment counseling to poor families.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the law barring “mixed race” Koreans from serving in the military was revised.<sup>39</sup>

Despite various measures and much progress, current “multicultural policies” are still limited. Their most conspicuous limitation is that they do not apply to the majority of migrant groups including foreign workers. Although migrant workers’ conditions have improved markedly since the inception of EPS, the EPS was soon criticized for continuing to set off a portion of the labor force that is cheap and relatively exploitable, and for prohibiting the migrant workers to change their workplaces at will.<sup>40</sup> The way it creates a highly unequal relationship between worker and employer, thus increasing the possibility for exploitation and abuse, and the way it excludes unskilled migrant workers from eligibility for long-term residence and citizenship were two additional grounds for criticism. Many critics have also argued that the Korean government confines its multicultural scope to international marriage households because the government accepts international marriage as a legitimate means of solving

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<sup>34</sup> Moon, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> Korean Culture and Information Service, 2010.

<sup>36</sup> Moon, 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Park, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Park, 2006.

<sup>39</sup> Lim, 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Liem, 2009.

the labor shortage while maintaining a relatively homogeneous country.<sup>41</sup> In fact, many of the government-organized multicultural policies have been more favorable towards international brides than towards migrant workers, since the former are seen as contributing to the reproduction of the Korean nation, while the latter's contributions are economic and thus temporary. The narrow applicability of Korean multicultural policies reflects the prevailing power of ethnic nationalism in Korea.

More importantly, many of the above measures fail to address the underlying cause of racial discrimination, marginalization and subordination—namely, a national identity that holds difference and diversity to be undesirable.<sup>42</sup> An editorial in *The Korea Herald*, an English-language newspaper the majority of whose readers are foreigners residing in Korea, argued that “These policymakers seem to believe that like people with physical disabilities, the mixed-race people who have suffered from open and hidden discrimination in this society need social props to help them shed handicaps in finding opportunities in life.”<sup>43</sup> State-initiated multicultural policies that secure the survival of national and ethnic groups have been criticized on the grounds that they could deprive individual members of free choice by unfairly restricting the range of cultural options open to them.<sup>44</sup> In truth, Korea's multicultural policies have despite their rhetoric been recognized as being in accordance with what Castles<sup>45</sup> would classify as *the assimilationist model*, defined as a set of policies that seek to incorporate immigrants into society through a one-sided process of adaptation through which these immigrants are expected to give up their distinctive linguistic, cultural, and social characteristics and become indistinguishable from the majority population. In other words, Korea's multicultural policies, though they may have good intentions, demand that immigrants join Korean society at the price of cultural assimilation, rather than facilitating the coexistence of diverse cultures and values.

### *Globalization and Korean Racism*

While the Korean government intended to only “borrow” manpower, foreign workers have brought a variety of different cultures, ethnicities,

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<sup>41</sup> Kim, K., 2009: 12; Lee, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Lim, 2009.

<sup>43</sup> “Law for the Mixed-Blood?”, 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Kim, N., 2009: 28.

<sup>45</sup> Castles and Miller, 1998: 245.

and value systems into the country, all of which have gradually imparted multiethnic and multicultural characteristics to Korea's traditionally homogenous society. This slew of demographic shifts is undoubtedly a direct product of modernization, while the increase in the migrant worker population is indicative of the fact that South Korea has become more deeply incorporated into the global economy. However, even as Korea has become globalized—i.e., more interconnected with the rest of the world—its response to globalization has been shaped by the ideology of ethnic nationalism as well as by the country's history of national development. Initiating Korea's drive for globalization was a state with a clearly nationalist agenda, as was the case when Korea strove to modernize itself in earlier decades. *Segyehwa* was used in place of a more Western word to designate a particularly *Korean* kind of globalization, i.e., one that promoted globalization in order to enhance Korea's national competitiveness and simultaneously seeking to preserve and if possible strengthen Korean heritage and culture. Hyun Ok Park characterizes *segryehwa* as a new "language of nationalism" that demands a "de-territorialized national community among Koreans." Indeed, as it pushed for globalization, the Korean government called for "national unity in order to survive and gain leadership in the international community."<sup>46</sup>

The persistence of Korean nationalism throughout the process of globalization has ignited some controversy over the connection between the two concepts. C. Fred Alford argues that instead of embracing globalization, Koreans respond to globalization out of necessity and the need to survive in the global economy.<sup>47</sup> In Samuel Kim's view, Korea's exclusive ethnic and cultural nationalism acts as a powerful and persistent constraint on the *segryehwa* drive.<sup>48</sup> While both Alford and Kim offer solid arguments, it should be noted that to most Koreans, there appears to exist no inherent contradiction between nationalism and globalization. In fact, national and global forces do *not* necessarily counteract each other; they are often readily compatible and interactive. This is because globalization can be appropriated for national interests and can intensify, rather than weaken, national consciousness. To Koreans, globalization is a means of obtaining a competitive edge for their nation. In this sense, turning to globalization is similar to learning English, exporting cars and electronics, and studying abroad. During the Kim Dae Jung era (1998–2002), for example,

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<sup>46</sup> Park, 1996: 2.

<sup>47</sup> Alford, 1999: 12.

<sup>48</sup> Kim, 2000: 275.

the Korean government recognized the strategic value of overseas Koreans and especially Korean Americans, and promulgated a special law for utilizing overseas Koreans as a national resource for development in the global era. With this policy in place, the Korean government has viewed and welcomed many emigrant Koreans as a new economic force.

Korea's process of globalization with its obviously nationalistic agenda has been closely linked to racism just as its strong notion of nationalism has led to racial discrimination and has given rise to new forms of racism and, in many cases, to more widespread and intensified discrimination.<sup>49</sup> Insofar as globalization is concerned, an exposure to other societies and cultures—comparisons between “us” and “them,” “superior” and “inferior”—frequently heightens one's national consciousness, augmenting ethnic identity, which, again, may result in racial discrimination. For many Koreans, globalization means global economic leadership. To them, whites have achieved great economic power and are therefore “role models” for the Korean people. Because of their economic status, people from affluent countries are often equated with whites. Incho Lee adds that Koreans often not only admire whites as an ideal globalized group because of their skin color, but also because of their symbolic power and their economic and cultural capital.<sup>50</sup> In fact, many Koreans show signs of an eagerness to position themselves closer to dominant groups. Conversely, negative attitudes toward blacks and Asians from relatively poor East Asian countries persist among some groups of Koreans, even Korean-Americans living in the United States, creating new grounds for racism. Evidently, according to a survey conducted by Professor Bang Hui-Jeong among Korean college students concerning their views on foreigners of a different race, 121 college students' unspoken or implied attitudes towards whites, blacks, and Southeast Asians were measured and found to be  $-0.25$  for whites,  $-0.51$  for blacks, and  $-0.55$  for Southeast Asians.<sup>51</sup> The students were shown pictures of foreigners of various races and asked to choose between words such as “happiness,” “peace,” “annoyance,” and “hate.” The results were obtained from their word choices. A score of 0 would indicate little or no prejudice, while anything lower would indicate prejudicial attitudes. On the basis of these results, Bang believes that the people of Korea have an inferiority complex [Kor. *yöltüŋg üisik*] towards whites and a superiority complex [*uwöl üisik*] towards blacks and Southeast Asians.

<sup>49</sup> Castles and Miller, 1998: 179.

<sup>50</sup> Lee, I., 2009: 4.

<sup>51</sup> Bang, 2008.



For some foreigners, subtle racial discrimination is a part of daily life in Korea. The story of an Indian man, Bonojit Hussain, who was racially slurred on a bus made its way across the world to the pages of *The New York Times*.<sup>52</sup> “To me, it is obvious that racial discrimination is an everyday phenomenon in Korea, but nobody seems to talk about it in public. Some people judge me to be a poor migrant worker due to my skin color,” said Hussain in interviews after the incident.<sup>53</sup> Brit Salmon, a long-time resident journalist in South Korea, likewise commented that “the problem here is a prejudice toward people with darker skin more than toward anyone else.”<sup>54</sup> Scholars generally agree that Korean racism is heavily based on skin color—that is, that those of a darker complexion suffer the most from overt racial discrimination. Park No-Ja, a Russian-born scholar who later became a naturalized Korean citizen, argues, “Now, the ‘white complex’ is a modern racism that has an obsession with skin color. Koreans are non-white people who believe in white supremacy.”<sup>55</sup> Park adds, “There is direct evidence of discrimination against Korean-Chinese and Mongolians who have the same blood or appearance as Koreans.”<sup>56</sup> Likewise, even those migrant workers who share Korean blood—i.e., ethnic Koreans from China—are subject to workplace abuse and mistreatment. This form of racism is evidently a product of Korea’s rapid economic growth and a process of globalization that has supplied Koreans with false ideas of “superiority” and “inferiority.” Korea has become a multi-ethnic society, but is yet to become a multi-cultural society, and Koreans often tend to conflate the two just as they conflate nation, race, and ethnicity.

### *The Road to a Functioning Multiculturalism*

In 2007, the UN CERD (United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) issued a report stating that the concept of “pure-bloodedness” in Korea has produced various forms of discrimination against social “others.”<sup>57</sup> According to the report, “The emphasis placed on the ethnic homogeneity of Korea may represent an obstacle to the promotion of tolerance and friendship among the different ethnic and national

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<sup>52</sup> Choe, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Kim, E., 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Kim, E., 2009.

<sup>55</sup> Hwang, 2009.

<sup>56</sup> Hwang, 2009.

<sup>57</sup> The United Nations, 2007.

groups living in its territory. Korea has to embrace the multi-ethnic character of contemporary Korean society [...] The image of an ethnically homogeneous Korea is now a thing of the past.”<sup>58</sup> Various domestic and international organizations, such as the UN CERD and Amnesty International have since expressed deep concerns about the Korean ethnic consciousness that encourages a false sense of uniformity and enforces conformity to it. It is in large part due to this pressure to respect universal human rights as evidence of democratization, that Korea has experienced its current surge of discourse promoting “true” multiculturalism. But many NGOs and civil activist groups in Korea, reacting to the warnings from these international communities, have sought to trigger a multiculturalism that is different from that of previous state-organized policies. Women’s groups and human rights focused NGOs have undertook to secure multicultural rights. In the early stages of the development of a “multicultural” society, these groups demanded that non-Koreans be awarded the same rights as native Koreans. They demanded social recognition for minority groups in the public sphere as well, and maintained that the migrant workers, international brides, and multiethnic children should be allowed to be distinctly different from natives in terms of race, culture, and religion. The emphasis of these groups has shifted from human rights to the right to work and eventually to citizenship. Meanwhile, the National Assembly Research Service (NARS) has also called on policymakers to respect cultural differences, saying that “Policymakers need to be aware that migrant workers or spouses are not subjects who should be assimilated into this country but human beings who have different cultural standards.”<sup>59</sup>

These societal pressures in favor of measures that would ensure the immigrants’ cultural rights have caused the South Korean government to devote attention to the problems arising from Korea’s nationalism, racism and increasing heterogeneity. While Korea still lacks effective policies for obtaining the acceptance and acknowledgement of foreigners and their cultures, it has started to take truly multicultural steps in some areas of society. Currently, eight ministries, including the Ministry for Health, Welfare, and Family Affairs and the Ministry of Gender Equality, as well as local governments, are involved in policy measures that affect non-Koreans residing in Korea (‘For the Migrant’). These ministries sponsor Korean language programs and a variety of cultural exposure programs,

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<sup>58</sup> Moon, 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Kang, H.K., 2010.

such as festivals, to help about one million foreign nationals. Under the current administration, the ministries have claimed that they will include not only immigrants but Koreans in general in their multicultural agenda. The recent policy outline of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism emphasizes the need for a shift from a system of assimilating different cultures to one of bilateral communication between natives and newcomers.<sup>60</sup> National campaigns have been developed with the objective of generating the social acceptance of foreign nationals and raising the public's awareness of multicultural issues. "The most important thing is to change the way Koreans feel about immigrants," Lee Eun-sun, an official at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's Multicultural Policy Team told *The Korea Herald*.<sup>61</sup> Likewise, the Ministry of Education announced that middle school textbooks would no longer describe Korea as "a nation unified by a single bloodline," but would instead speak of "a multiethnic and multicultural society." Textbooks for fifth and sixth graders now include chapters on foreigners' different ways of life and some of the difficulties faced by mixed race children.<sup>62</sup>

In addition, the government has begun to proactively solve problems related to international marriages. Since marriage is a personal issue, the government has been reluctant to interfere with the formation of marriage and has focused instead on providing education for foreign wives. However, the Ministry of Justice announced a new slogan, "International marriage, no longer a matter of personal choice," in response to growing international concern about the physical and verbal abuses of foreign brides by their husbands, and has issued a mandatory cultural education requirement for Korean men who wish to marry non-Koreans.<sup>63</sup> Linguistic and cultural barriers between spouses are the primary cause of conflicts in international marriages, and the Korean government now recognizes that a husband should be knowledgeable about his wife's cultural background. The government has also integrated components of multicultural education by teaching multiethnic children about the Korean language and culture, in this way attempting to minimize the possibility of identity crises among such children. These attempts, however, have often been criticized for aiming to assimilate multicultural families and multiethnic children into mainstream Korean culture.

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<sup>60</sup> Kim, N., 2009: 19. Also See Lee, 2008.

<sup>61</sup> Jeong, 2008.

<sup>62</sup> Kim, N., 2009: 20.

<sup>63</sup> Kang, S., 2010.

NGOs and local governments also continue to play an important role in spreading multiculturalism by running cultural centers that teach international brides and migrant workers how to speak Korean, cook, use a computer, and even create a job application, and by offering them venues for multicultural activities. As the president of the Korean Multicultural Congress, a recently launched nationwide association, remarks, "Multiculturalism should not be discussed only at the level of providing welfare for [...] families. Koreans have to accept multiculturalism, and education will play an important role."<sup>64</sup> Koreans should *learn* to envision and value a society in which the dominant and minority groups can live together not merely as fellow citizens, but as equal citizens. Otherwise, one should not expect Korea to become a multicultural society that would require the accommodation of considerable cultural and ethnic diversity.

### *Concluding Remarks*

Korea is clearly in the process of changing from a homogenous society to one that is culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse. In the midst of this transition, Korea has shown that when a society becomes diverse, it does not necessarily become tolerant of diversity. In other words, Korea has yet to become a multi-cultural society while it has essentially become a multi-ethnic nation. As ethnic and cultural diversification has proceeded at an increasingly rapid rate, the exclusionary nature of Korean nationalism and national identity has become a growing concern. Hostility and discrimination towards foreigners have weakened, but much remains to be rectified. Migrant workers and foreign brides, who account for the majority of foreigners residing in Korea, still face discrimination in their pursuit of societal, political, and economic rights. Children of international marriages remain educationally disadvantaged and are vulnerable to identity crises due to social prejudice. Laws and practices continue to restrict immigration and limit immigrants' rights.

In truth, a considerable number of Koreans seem unready for a multi-ethnic society and have yet to accept the fact that their country is becoming increasingly heterogeneous. Common responses to multiculturalism in Korea have been negative because the coexistence of different racial or ethnic groups is recognized as harmful to national unity. A piece in

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<sup>64</sup> Kwon, 2010.

*The Korea Herald* revealed something of Korean society's unchanged attitudes towards "others." One South Korean woman, who regarded herself as open-minded, said, "I have always believed that Korea is a single-race country. Somehow, Korea becoming a multi-racial society doesn't sound right."<sup>65</sup> Overt racism may be less frequent and serious than it was in the past, but it remains deeply embedded in Korean national consciousness. What remains at the core of Koreans' social and ideological basis for discrimination toward non-Koreans is a narrow conceptualization of *Koreanness*.

Korea may be multi-ethnic, but it has little chance of becoming multicultural if it insists on using integration strategies for attaining "multiculturalism." As Castles writes, "Cultural integration leaves no room for long-term cultural or ethnic diversity."<sup>66</sup> If it is the aim of the Korean government and its people to establish a truly multicultural society, what they need is an institutional framework that would promote a democratic national identity and educate the Korean populace to allow for greater diversity and tolerance. Korean ethnic nationalism deserves much recognition for its contribution to modern Korean history, but it can be an obstacle to the country's desire to meet the expectations of the global community. The key challenge facing Korean society, then, is its ability to not only to recognize the reality of increasing ethnic heterogeneity but also to promote ethnic and cultural pluralism by taming the racist modes of thought implicit in ethnic nationalism.

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<sup>65</sup> Shin, H., 2006.

<sup>66</sup> Castles and Miller, 1998: 246.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### SKIN COLOR MELANCHOLY IN MODERN JAPAN: MALE ELITES' RACIAL EXPERIENCES ABROAD, 1880s–1950s

Ayu Majima

Start now on that farthest western way, which does not pause at the Mississippi or the Pacific, nor conduct toward a worn-out China or Japan, but leads on direct, a tangent to this sphere, summer and winter, day and night, sun down, moon down, and at last earth down too.<sup>1</sup>

Henry David Thoreau (1854)

For modern Japan, the West was located far beyond the emperor. When Takahashi Korekiyo (1854–1936), who later became finance minister and prime minister, was appointed to travel and investigate the West in 1885 for the eventual establishment of the Japan Patent Office, he was received in audience by the Meiji Emperor four days prior to his departure. This was his second journey to the United States. During his first extended visit in 1867, when he was 14, his host family was actually his “owner.” Unbeknownst to him, Takahashi had been sold as a servant under contract. Upon his return to Japan in 1868, Takahashi was ordered to meet Lord Rakuzan, the Sendai Daimyo, to explain what the United States was like.<sup>2</sup> Those around him chided him, saying, “You should be thankful you were even allowed to be in the presence of the Lord despite your lower status as an *ashigaru*.”<sup>3</sup>

The illegitimate son of a family maid and her master, Takahashi was later adopted into the family of Takahashi Kakuji, a low-ranking samurai. Despite his upbringing and status Takahashi was received by Emperor Meiji before his second trip to the West at the age of 32. In that era, an excursion to the West was imbued with enough meaning to grant one an audience with the emperor. In this regard, modern Japan considered

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<sup>1</sup> Thoreau, 1882 [1854]: 497.

<sup>2</sup> Smethurst, 2007: 35.

<sup>3</sup> Takahashi, 1976: 83.

the West even more distant than the emperor. Moreover, a considerable cultural “distance” existed between Japan and the West. However, after Takahashi’s second trip to the States, distances on a global scale began to shrink. According to Sonoda Hidehiro, the world became round after the mid-nineteenth century. Until then, the scope of human activities was limited by the perception of the world as flat, with Japan—the Far East—on one end, and America’s East Coast—the Far West—on the other.<sup>4</sup> Although Magellan and his crew had proven the earth was round in the sixteenth century, this discovery was limited on a conceptual level.

The world actually became round, or a “sphere,” around mid-century when Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) described it in his 1854 book *Walden*. This year was significant in that it marked the beginning of the age of steamboats, railroads and telegraphy in Japan. These advances in travel and communication saw the physical world transformed into an “endless circulation,” with no beginning or end points.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Meiji Restoration and Japan’s opening to the world could also be considered the result of these shrinking distances.<sup>6</sup> The American “black ships” that reached Japan in 1853 had not in fact crossed the Pacific Ocean. It took roughly 200 days to reach “the Far East” from the East Coast of the United States.<sup>7</sup> What obstructed the world from becoming “round” from this perspective was the existence of the American continent. However, when the Transcontinental Railroad was completed and a steamship made crossing the Pacific Ocean possible in the late nineteenth century, this meant the end of “the Far East” and “the Far West.” This also saw the gradual transformation of the United States from a peripheral nation located in the Far West to a “center of the world.”<sup>8</sup> Most importantly, this was the moment when Japan and the United States became “neighbors” across the Pacific Ocean. And as the world became substantially rounder, both its structure and perception underwent drastic changes. In short, the diminishment of geographic distances led to the emergence of a new kind of a distance, namely an emotional distance characterized by fear, anxiety and hatred manifested as the “White Peril,” “Yellow Peril” and in racial conflicts within the United States.

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<sup>4</sup> Sonoda, 2003: 11.

<sup>5</sup> Sonoda, 2003: 11.

<sup>6</sup> Sonoda, 1994: 49.

<sup>7</sup> Sonoda, 1994: 49.

<sup>8</sup> Sonoda, 1994: 49.



So, how did the Japanese perceive the racial distance between Japan and the West that was evident by the 1880s? How did the Japanese react towards the racial distances that began to emerge in the mid-nineteenth century? This chapter will focus on the distance manifested by skin tone, namely the manner in which racial distances were perceived among Japanese elites from the 1880s to the 1950s. There are several reasons why this chapter traces their experiences in the West during this period. First, it was around the 1880s when racial interactions became widespread with the development of steamships and railroads. In addition, after the mid-1950s, airplanes replaced steamships as a means for people to travel abroad. As far as the racial experiences of the elites were concerned, the time they spent on the steam was significant. This was time spent in extended close proximity with others of a different class, race and gender. This chapter traces Japanese racial experiences in the age of steam. Second, racial experiences were most prevalent among those who ventured out of Japan, which means they were limited to the elites or the lower classes who chose to immigrate. Because the elites in modern Japan tended to fortify their own identity with a strong sense of national pride [*kokkateki jisonshin*], the examination of their narratives insofar as they relate to racial distance is a particularly useful resource for tracing Japanese reactions to racial consciousness.

Third, in Japanese national identification the West was regarded as the most important Other.<sup>9</sup> In modern Japan in particular, where “Westernization” was undertaken as a way for Japan to become Japan, the sense of dilemma, contradiction and disjuncture was perceived in many ways. Thus, what follows is a closer look at how racial consciousness formed through the lens of the Japanese elites’ racial experiences in the West. In doing so, this chapter seeks to shed light on the dilemma Japan faced with regard to its identity and frame of mind since the onset of modern period by observing reactions towards the perceived racial distance between Japan and the West.

### *Differentiate to Assimilate: Racial Experiences in the United States*

‘Well John,’ he intruded upon the Japanese scientists, ‘these things must look awful strange to you from China, ey!’ One among the Japanese retorted the insulting question, and said, ‘So they must be to you from Ireland.’ The

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<sup>9</sup> Yonehara, 2003.

gentleman got angry and said, 'No, indeed not. I am not an Irish.' 'And so we are not Chinese,' was the gentle rejoinder. It was a good blow, and the silk-hatted sulked away. He did not like to be called an Irish.<sup>10</sup>

Uchimura Kanzō (1895)

In 1884, the year in which Japan's military conscription system was revised, a number of young Japanese men travelled to the United States. During their more than 20-day journey across the Pacific Ocean, they encountered the numerous Chinese workers crammed in steerage; this stream of laborers migrating to the West Coast for the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad was known as the "The Yellow River." Takahashi, Uchimura and Mishima Yatarō (1867–1919), who later became the president of the Bank of Japan, were unable to tolerate the odor of the Chinese in the ship's hold, despite the fact that Mishima and Takahashi (in his second trip) traveled in first class.<sup>11</sup> It was actually around the same time that the German physician Erwin Baelz (in Tokyo from 1876 to 1905) named the blue spot on the coccyx "a Mongolian spot" and Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834–1901) published his article *Datsua Ron* [The Theory of Quitting Asia]. Paradoxically, while the racial categorization applied to the Japanese by outsiders was being solidified, the Japanese elites came to reveal their negative feelings towards both China and being categorized as Asians. Their subsequent experiences traveling to the West and to China (e.g., Ozaki Yukio's travel diary to China published in 1884) contributed to their contempt towards the Chinese.<sup>12</sup>

While the sense of contempt toward "Asia" was synchronized among the Japanese elites in this period, European immigrants, including Irish workers, were flocking to the East Coast, and the United States witnessed the emergence of a gradual conflict between Chinese and Irish workers. Irish Catholics were also discriminated against in the United States, so there was a multilayered structure of prejudices and discrimination, and the Japanese coming to the United States encountered complex racial circumstances. There, both Chinese and horses were called "John," and Uchimura was no exception. Upon lending his comb to a fellow passenger in a Chicago coach, the man "returned the comb saying, 'Well John, where do you keep your laundry shop?'"<sup>13</sup> Although Uchimura's Christian name was Johnathan, he could not help but describe the uncomfortable feeling

<sup>10</sup> Uchimura, 1895: 102–103.

<sup>11</sup> See Smethurst, 2007: 22; Takahashi, 1976: 40; Suzuki, 1986: 459; Mishima, 1994: 28–29.

<sup>12</sup> Namiki, 2008: 29–32.

<sup>13</sup> Uchimura, 1895: 121–122.

of being seen as Chinese. In fact, many Chinese ran laundry shops in the United States at that time and Kamei Shunsuke (1932–present) was also called “John” in the post-war United States.<sup>14</sup>

In another instance, “an intelligent looking gentleman” asked Uchimura when they had cut their “queues.” Uchimura replied, “we never had queues.” The gentleman then said, “Why, I thought all Chinamen had queues.”<sup>15</sup> Takahashi had his topknot cut by his grandmother just before his departure for the United States in 1867. Later, those of Uchimura’s generation commonly cut off their topknots and donned Western clothing. The Western appearance came to signify a “civilized” and elite culture in Japan. In the United States, however, it made the Japanese appear to be assimilating to the Chinese as part of being “Asian” and “yellow,” which made the Japanese uncomfortable.<sup>16</sup> While the Japanese were developing contempt towards the Chinese, they were also being categorized as “Asians” or “yellow” by Western society. This proved to be an inevitable yet unexpected paradox faced by the Japanese elites, who strongly bore their national pride as a civilized nation under the idea of “Quit Asia.” In his first book, *How I became a Christian*, published in 1895, Uchimura described how in church Japanese were considered “heathens,” expected to “mission show” like “rhinoceroses who like to be seen and petted gladly obey the manner, tell them how they ceased to be animals and began to live like men.”<sup>17</sup> He was also asked to give speeches wearing Japanese attire for “show.” Yet despite his hints at the arrogance displayed by the Westerners towards the “heathens,” Uchimura did not explicitly mention his disdain for how he was treated because it helped his financial situation, and he felt a debt of gratitude and courtesy to the people who had supported him.

The choice of clothing worn overseas by the Japanese elites also became a sensitive issue due to the conflict it brought about between the “ethnic” distinction of traditional attire and the “assimilation” that came as a result of Western attire, which made them undistinguishable from other “colored” people.<sup>18</sup> The Christian novelist Arishima Takeo (1878–1923) and his younger brother, the painter Arishima Ikuma (1882–1974) were to be received in audience by the Holy Father in the Vatican. Outraged to wear

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<sup>14</sup> Kamei, 1979.

<sup>15</sup> Uchimura, 1895: 103.

<sup>16</sup> Majima, 2004a; Majima, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Uchimura, 1895: 136.

<sup>18</sup> Majima, 2004b.

traditional Japanese attire, the plan was eventually dismissed because Arishima Takeo felt very insulted by the command which reflected an Orientalist view. (Majima, forthcoming). It may seem that the Japanese suffered from a contradiction in terms of their sense of being a civilized nation. Yet Tokutomi Sohō (1863–1957) strongly asserted that Japan belonging to Asia was merely a geographical connotation and nothing more.<sup>19</sup> For most Japanese elites in modern Japan or even in the post-war period, a strong sense of self-distinction and differentiation from “Asia” remained as psychological undercurrents. And such self-consciousness caused a profound anxiety and struggle in the formation of the Japanese identity, as well as in seeking to position Japan as a civilized nation, as described below.

### *Anxiety of a “First-Class Nation”*

Japan may seem to have succeeded in joining the ranks of the Western powers, but it still remains nothing more than a solitary wanderer. While nobody ignores Japan, there is hardly anyone who truly cares for it. Because Japan and the West are not linked by any native ties of race, religion, custom, or any other forms of material or spiritual life, Japan remains an isolated alien stranded in the midst of a vast world, gripped by an unavoidable feeling of desolate loneliness.<sup>20</sup>

Tokutomi Sohō (1905)

Although the Japanese elites showed their negative feelings towards the Chinese, some of them gradually developed a sense of disgust towards their own skin color, especially around the time of the Russo-Japanese War. In Natsume Sōseki's (1867–1916) *Sanshirō*, written after his traumatic visit to London, *Sanshirō* is struck by the “beauty” of the Western people. “We Japanese are sad-looking beings next to them. We can beat the Russians, we can become a first-class power, but it doesn't make any difference. We've still got the same faces, the same feeble little bodies.”<sup>21</sup> Sōseki also described his appearance as “a pigmy with a peculiar weird skin color” in *London Shosoku* in 1901, and continued, “We Japanese are like small monkeys with an earth-like skin color, so it is understandable that the Westerners deride us.”<sup>22</sup> His gloomy description might have been caused by his neurasthenia, but this sense of self-loathing stemming from skin

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<sup>19</sup> Yonehara, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Tokutomi, 1905: 1.

<sup>21</sup> Natsume, 1977: 14–15.

<sup>22</sup> Hirakawa, 1991: 194.

color became common among elites, especially after the Russo-Japanese war, when the self-consciousness of becoming a “first-class” nation started to swell in Japan.<sup>23</sup>

Although Sōseki does not use the term “race” or “yellow” in his description, Abe Isō (1865–1949) did. A Christian Socialist and professor who visited the United States from 1891 to 1894, Abe described the racial difference focusing on skin color in a similar manner:<sup>24</sup>

The reason the Japanese appear inferior to Westerners is not due to racial issues of being white or yellow-colored. What makes the Japanese appear to be inferior is solely due to the physique, appearance, and posture. All of the qualities mentioned here can be addressed and improved, thus, our faded, depressing, and melancholic skin color should not be an issue.<sup>25</sup>

Abe tried to recognize racial issues as bodily issues, emphasizing that inferiority could be overcome through effort. He believed “improving” one’s appearance could “improve” the “melancholic skin color.” Conversely, Taguchi Ukichi (1855–1905), the economist and historian, was critical of the Japanese being “labeled” as “yellow” in *Breaking through the Yellow Peril* published in June 1904. Taguchi wrote of how Western tourists described Japanese women as “white” while referring to Japanese men as “yellow.” However for the “*yamato minzoku*” or *yamato* race, the Japanese regarded being called “yellow” as a “disgrace” or “dishonor.” Taguchi also wrote, “We Japanese men are not at all yellow. The reason why our skin may appear yellow is only due to the lack of grooming as a custom.”<sup>26</sup>

According to Taguchi, it was the customs of Bushido that led Japanese men to regard grooming as a shameful behavior, causing the lack of “beauty” in their appearances. Taguchi also tried to turn racial issues into manageable physical issues. In a 1905 speech to the Association for Japanese History, he used the term “stigma” and concluded:

Based on the ignorant reports of some explorers around the world, the Japanese race has been misrepresented as a yellow race. However, we Japanese do not have to identify ourselves as part of this yellow race at all. The Western world now respects the Japanese civilization despite the claims that we are of yellow color. So now is the time to explain with confidence that ‘belonging to the yellow race’ has just been a ‘stigma’ that some foreign elites intentionally ‘labeled’ upon us. While it is true that there are ugly people in

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<sup>23</sup> Majima, 2003.

<sup>24</sup> On Abe, see Watanabe, 1978: 620–621.

<sup>25</sup> Abe, 1910: 246–247.

<sup>26</sup> Taguchi, 1904: 496.

Japan that could be considered yellow of color, not all Europeans could be considered not ugly in appearance as well.<sup>27</sup>

For Taguchi, the “yellow race” was associated with “stigma” and an ugly appearance, which was similar to Sōseki’s sense of disgust towards his skin color and appearance. Abe also tried to replace racial issues with controllable issues in grooming. However, these interpretations of racial difference imply that they did realize skin color was actually not something to be altered by effort but rather a fatal flaw. In January 1904, just before the Russo-Japanese War, Itō Miyoji (1857–1934), Chief Cabinet Secretary and Minister of Agriculture and Commerce under Itō Hirobumi’s administration, as well as president of the *Tokyo Nichinichi Shinbun*, stated to the physician Baelz, then residing in Tokyo, “Needless to say, what’s been inconvenient is the fact that we Japanese belong to the yellow race.”<sup>28</sup> No matter how “civilized” Japan became, skin color could not be changed. For elites in Modern Japan, the concept of “civilization” and of “race” inevitably conflicted in their mindset and make it difficult for them to distinguish one from the other.

### *Pathos of the Glorious “Colored”*

Japan’s Racial Equality Clause was denied by the Western powers, and racial discrimination such as the Japanese exclusion in California still remains, which is enough insult to raise the wrath among the Japanese.<sup>29</sup>

Emperor Shōwa (1946)

Although Japanese exclusion was largely caused by racial discrimination, some elites tried to deny this by replacing the issue with class issues, similar to the interpretation of physical grooming. According to the Minister of War, Terauchi Masatake (1852–1919), the Anti-Japanese movement arose because Japan had sent “bottom-class workers” who looked like “monkeys in the zoos” to the United States.<sup>30</sup> In fact, the Japanese Government encouraged workers from farming villages to emigrate because these villages were so impoverished and their population continued to grow.<sup>31</sup> Terauchi’s view towards the Japanese immigrants in the United

<sup>27</sup> Taguchi, 1905: 513–514.

<sup>28</sup> Baelz, 1943–1952: 161–162.

<sup>29</sup> Terasaki and Miller, 1995: 23–24.

<sup>30</sup> Ishikawa, 1908: 20.

<sup>31</sup> Yamada, 1998: 69.

States was shared among elites since racial issues originally emerged as labor issues. However, the Japanese Exclusion Act of 1924 did not support the Japanese elites' interpretation of existing class issues but made obvious the racial distinction between Japan and the United States.

As cited, the Emperor Shōwa (1901–1989) saw the Exclusion Act as “a remote cause of the Pacific War.”<sup>32</sup> When President Woodrow Wilson met Ambassador Chinda Sutemi (1857–1929) in 1913, he was shocked by Chinda's grave reaction to the Law, and knew then that war was more than a possibility.<sup>33</sup> As a letter on 8 February 1924 from Secretary of State Charles E. Hughes to Chairman of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization Albert Johnson stated, “The Japanese are a sensitive people, and unquestionably would regard such a legislative enactment as fixing a stigma upon them.”<sup>34</sup> It also aptly used the term stigma, used before by Taguchi. In fact, opinions against the Japanese Exclusion Act were an immediate reason for public outcry in Japan. The population had become exasperated by the weak-kneed diplomacy that brought national dishonor amidst the emotional bashing from the mass media. This manifested in extremely emotional and near mass-hysterical situations, such as the suicides near the American Embassy on May 31, the follow-up suicides, the events for consoling the spirits of the deceased, and the countless letters sent to the Naval Department calling for war against the United States.<sup>35</sup>

While the situation heated up rapidly, it quickly subsided. However, the elites' reaction towards the Act remained strong. On the 15th of January 1924, Hanihara Masanao, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States, stated in a memorandum that “to preserve the self-respect” of Japan, “the sole desire of the Japanese Government was to relieve the United States Government from the painful embarrassment of giving offence to the just national pride of a friendly nation.”<sup>36</sup> Three months later on April 10th, Hanihara sent another letter to Secretary of State Hughes:

To Japan the question is not one of expediency, but of principle. To her the mere fact that a few hundreds or thousands of her nationals will or will not be admitted into the domains of other countries is immaterial, so long as no question of national susceptibilities is involved. The important question is whether Japan as a nation is or is not entitled to the proper respect and consideration of other nations. In other words, the Japanese Government ask of the United States Government simply that proper consideration ordinarily

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<sup>32</sup> Terasaki and Miller, 1995: 24.

<sup>33</sup> Shibusawa, 1970: 249–250.

<sup>34</sup> Congressional Record, 1924: 5811.

<sup>35</sup> Matsuzawa, 1980: 363–364.

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1980: 117.



given by one nation to the self-respect of another, which after all forms the basis of amicable international intercourse throughout the civilized world.<sup>37</sup>

Some criticized Japan's contradiction in terms of its pressure on Asia, but their anger only focused on Japan's national dishonor and on the insults to its reputation.<sup>38</sup> According to Hanihara's correspondence with Secretary of State Hughes, the Exclusion Act "would naturally wound the national susceptibilities of the Japanese people."<sup>39</sup> It would also bring "the possible unfortunate necessity of offending the national pride of a friendly nation . . . stigmatizing them as unworthy and undesirable in the eyes of the American people"<sup>40</sup> and "seriously offend the just pride of a friendly nation."<sup>41</sup>

Even Kiyosawa Kiyoshi (1890–1945), known as a liberal journalist, also took a critical stance of this. "Discrimination from the United States," he wrote, "was due to regarding the Japanese as colored people. This is a disgrace to the most delicate matter of the Japanese ethnic pride."<sup>42</sup> On the 2nd of July at the *Kokumin Shinbun*, Tokutomi Sohō designated the 1st of July 1924—the day the Anti-Japanese immigration law had passed—as the "Day of National Dishonor." He explained the significance of the day to be one of "cutting ties with the United States, and embracing their Asian brothers."<sup>43</sup> Tokutomi explained that the Anti-Japanese Law had caused "the Japanese to suffer unprecedented insult."<sup>44</sup> He also stated, "The immigrant issue is not simply a matter of U.S.-Japan relations, it is the issue [lying] between the United States and the colored races."<sup>45</sup> In the meantime, Nitobe Inazō (1862–1933) wrote in his 1931 correspondence on the night before the Manchurian Incident that the Exclusion Act was "a severe shock which came completely out of the blue . . . my heart was deeply wounded and I felt strongly insulted as if we Japanese were suddenly pushed down from our respected status to being the wretched of the earth."<sup>46</sup>

America's racial categorization aggravate Japan's anger, which turned to anxiety as a result of Japan's diminishing sense of belonging in the world; "the world" being limited to the Western powers. As Tokutomi cited earlier,

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1980: 141.

<sup>38</sup> Matsuzawa, 1980: 364.

<sup>39</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1980: 136.

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1980: 136.

<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1980: 141.

<sup>42</sup> Kiyosawa, 1942: 431.

<sup>43</sup> Minohara, 2002: 235–236.

<sup>44</sup> Minohara, 2002: 236.

<sup>45</sup> Asada, 1993: 311.

<sup>46</sup> Asada, 1993: 309.

even if Japan earned a status equal to that of the Western powers, there would still be a great “distance” between them, namely one of racial and religious differences, and the whole difference between the East and West. The sentiment of being a “solitary wanderer” rejected by the West contradicts the manner in which Japan brought about its own isolation. Tokutomi also asserted that the expression “Asian” had no other meaning beyond the geographical, and thus Japan’s self-perceptions and identity no longer belonged to Asia.<sup>47</sup> The sense of isolation was actually based on the denial of “Asia,” and it came from Japan’s own identification built upon the idea of “Quit Asia and Join Europe.” It could be said that Japan’s contradictory identification came to reveal Japan’s inability to identify with either the East or the West, a situation that came about through the emergence a consciousness of the racial distance, especially from 1919 to 1924.

*The Unstable Nation to “Harmonize” East and West*

The Japanese inferiority was a product of influence from the heredity and circumstances that surrounded the Japanese people over centuries and that had eventually even caused a melancholic appearance. . . We Japanese [nihon minzoku] somehow need to open up a new destiny.<sup>48</sup>

Ōkuma Shigenobu (1913)

Karen Horney, a Neo-Freudian psychoanalyst regards the inferiority complex as the absence of a sense of “belonging.”<sup>49</sup> Japan, especially since the 1920s, faced a strong sense of isolation with the self-recognition that Japan did not belong either to the West or to the East. In 1913, Ōkuma Shigenobu tried to resolve racial issues by attempting to interpret them as grooming issues, as had been done before by other members of the Japanese elites.<sup>50</sup> However, the Japanese “melancholic appearance” was caused by Japanese hereditary “inferiority,” so the Japanese needed to “open up a new destiny.”<sup>51</sup> So, what was “the new destiny” for Japan? According to Ōkuma, Japan’s mission was “to break the boundary between Eastern and Western civilizations, break the racial boundaries between the yellow and white races, and expand a universal

<sup>47</sup> Yonehara, 2003: 156.

<sup>48</sup> Ōkuma, 1913: 54.

<sup>49</sup> Horney, 1950: 21.

<sup>50</sup> Ōkuma, 1913.

<sup>51</sup> Ōkuma, 1913: 10, 24, 38.

civilization in the world.”<sup>52</sup> Ōkuma advocated the vision of harmonizing the Eastern and Western civilizations, and the vision became part of the ideological mainstream at that time. According to Yonehara, it was the midway-point for Japan, from “Quit Asia” to “Return to Asia,” and Japan came to identify itself as a “moderator” between East and West.<sup>53</sup>

It was a plausible option of identification for Japan as Japan faced an unstable position since taking the course of “Quit Asia.” This positioning was also the best “solution” for filling Japan’s loss of a sense of belonging as a “colored” Empire, but for Japanese identification purposes, we cannot ignore “shadows” of the fragility and instability Japan suffered throughout the 1930s, the so-called age of the “return to Japan.” Tanizaki Jun’ichirō (1886–1965) described Japanese women’s skin color negatively using the word “shadows.”<sup>54</sup> According to his *In-ei Raisan*, written in 1933–4, the Japanese and Western perceptions of differences in skin whiteness are somewhat different. “No matter how white the Japanese skin may be, there will always be at least a slight trace of a shadow [*kageri*] cast. No matter how Japanese women may apply white skin foundation, the dark tone lurking from within the depths of the skin cannot be concealed.” For Tanizaki, “the dark color is analogous to the excrement in the bottom of a clean river.” Moreover, even with white skin foundation, “shades and shadows like dark dust partially remain.” On the other hand, there was no presence of shades or shadows on Westerners’ skin.

Therefore, when one of us enters their gatherings, the Japanese seem like a gray stain on a white paper, and even for the Japanese, it looks like an eyesore, and doesn’t look comfortable. In this sense, it is understandable that the White excludes the colored, and especially for the sensitive Whites, [where] even just one or two colored among them could appear as one stain.<sup>55</sup>

Conversely, Hagiwara Sakutarō (1886–1942) captured “Japanese beauty” in the “shades and shadows” of Japanese skin color. Hagiwara stated that Japanese skin color was defined as a “creamy color with deep shadows.” Hagiwara also defined the aesthetic of shades and shadows, stating that the skin color of Western women lacked “enchanted shadows” in contrast with “Japanese skin color, which possessed beautiful variations of subtle shades between white and yellow.” For Hagiwara, the shades and shadows

<sup>52</sup> Yonehara, 2003: 156.

<sup>53</sup> Yonehara, 2003: 158–159.

<sup>54</sup> Majima, 2004a, 2004b.

<sup>55</sup> Tanizaki, 1985: 209–211.

were the essential parts of Japanese beauty.<sup>56</sup> Incidentally, Tanizaki and Hagiwara were both born in 1886 and neither had ever been to the West. However, both argued for the beauty and ugliness of Japanese skin color using the phrase “shades and shadows.” Whether it was beautiful or ugly, the distinction between Japanese skin and Western skin was the presence of these “shades and shadows.” The racial difference described as “shades and shadows” as well as “melancholy,” came to refer to “the eternal distance” that distinguished Japan and the West.

### *The Eternal Distance*

I had a well-proportioned body despite being Japanese. However, what was reflected upon the mirror was my body sunk with the dark-yellow skin color next to the bright white breasts and shoulders of her body... This yellow-muddied skin color and her bright white skin color couldn't be beautiful or harmonized together. It was rather ugly. It reminds me of a dark-yellow insect sticking to a beautiful white flower. The dark-yellow skin color itself reminds me of [the] human bile... It is impossible to erase skin color differences through affection or idealism.... It may be possible to overcome class boundar[ies], however, racial boundaries can never be overcome. I am eternally yellow, and she is eternally white.<sup>57</sup>

Endō Shūsaku (1954)

Endō Shūsaku (1923–1996), a prominent Japanese Catholic novelist who was nominated as a finalist for the Nobel Prize for Literature should be regarded as the only Japanese novelist who fatally pursued the eternal distance between Japan and the West. In his first short novel, *To Aden* [*Aden made*], he was the first among the Japanese to address the racial and religious differences between Japan and the West. This theme is manifest in his racial and religious experiences since childhood, and his suffering during his studies in France from 1950 to 1953.

In 1950, when Japan had no diplomatic relations with other countries, Endō boarded the French cruise ship *La Marseillaise* to France, a month-long trip from Yokohama to Marseille. Due to financial restrictions, he had to stay for a month in the underdeck along with the cargo, where the odor of so many Algerian soldiers, Chinese, and other Asians with whom he shared the space, was torturous. At some ports, Endō and other Japanese

<sup>56</sup> Hagiwara, 1936: 87–89.

<sup>57</sup> Endō and Satō, 1999f [1954]: 13, 16, 23.

passengers were abused by officers as “war criminal citizens.” His meals consisted of leftovers which were hung from a can around his neck. At one point Endō was late, and a French boy yelled and knocked him down. When Endō screamed, “I am a passenger,” the boy scornfully laughed and yelled back, “You guys are not passengers. We pity and thus let yellows and blacks on board, you wretched yellow!”<sup>58</sup> At the Luxembourg Park in Paris while Endō was watching a dirty monkey in a used cage, he was told by a Frenchman who passed by, “You have the same skin color as the monkey.”<sup>59</sup> Although these experiences formed just a part of Endō’s experiences in France, Endō stated that “sadness of skin color” must have been experienced by many, but many of the Japanese elites tried to hide them or merely avoided talking about these “miserable” experiences after returning to Japan.<sup>60</sup> Conversely, Endō consistently tried to shed light on the “shades and shadows” that other Japanese faced but tried to hide. For Endō, facing the “distance” between Japan and the West fundamentally meant seeking the “unfillable gap,” the sense of disjuncture he had suffered since childhood.<sup>61</sup>

In order to discuss Endō’s racial experiences, it is necessary to look at his religious path, which deeply affected his perspective towards racial distance. Before Endō was insulted as a ‘war criminal’ citizen during his trip to France, he was also insulted as being an “un-patriot” [*hikokumin*] in wartime Japan due to his religious beliefs. Endō was often asked, “What on earth do you believe in: The Emperor or the hostile God?”<sup>62</sup> He was christened at the age of ten in accordance with his mother’s wishes. At that time, he was asked “Do you believe in God?” which was essentially the same as being asked, “Do you eat sweets?” So he replied, “Yes, I do.” From that moment onwards, Catholicism became an “unfit attire” that caused him tremendous suffering.<sup>63</sup> Endō explained, “Christianity was a western garment that could not be fitted properly upon myself at all. There was the undeniable presence of a gaping emptiness that could not be embraced by this garment and thus I could never consider Christianity as a part of me.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, the psychological experiences of distance

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<sup>58</sup> Endō and Satō, 1991: 32.

<sup>59</sup> Endō, 1990a: 112–113.

<sup>60</sup> Endō, 1965.

<sup>61</sup> Yasuoka, 1980: 43.

<sup>62</sup> Endō and Satō, 1991: 61.

<sup>63</sup> Endō and Satō, 1999a: 300.

<sup>64</sup> Endō and Satō, 1999b: 395.

that Endō had faced since childhood were “revealed” again and repeatedly experienced throughout his time in France, as if leading him to his fate.

The particular circumstances he faced in France prompted him to “reveal” this suffering. First, as a Catholic scholarship recipient, Endō was expected to study Catholic literature in France and spread the word of Catholicism in Japan upon his return. This became a burden and point of resistance for him, especially when he was called “Paul.” Not only was this his Christian name, but it was also the name of his host family’s son who had died long ago. Thus Endō found he often had to endure the “mission show” just as Uchimura had. Although Endō was often touched by the kindness and consideration of his host family, he could not help but sense Western supremacy based on Christianity among the people around him. Second, when he first arrived in France in 1950 he was hosted in Rouen, a closed countryside town where medieval Catholicism was historically rooted, more so than in any other areas of France. Endō was thus treated as a very rare “*étranger*,” always stared at and ostracized as townspeople whispered “a Chinese is coming.” Their attitude towards him made it impossible for Endō to ignore their racial prejudice, as well as his own feelings of isolation, loneliness and disjuncture.

Studying in France, Endō gradually and physically came face-to-face with “the eternal distance.” When he first arrived there in the summer of 1950, he visited the oldest Gothic church in Marseille. “The centuries-old blood of Europe flows in these cold stones.”<sup>65</sup> He was profoundly touched by the long history of Europe. However, after three years had passed he came to feel pain and fatigue from “the heavy presence within the stones.” Endō wrote many times that what he felt was not the “guilt” professed by European Catholicism, but “fatigue, very heavy fatigue like my yellowish skin color which seemed muddy, dampish, and heavily sunken.”<sup>66</sup> Seven years later, Endō visited France again and described “the stones” as follows:

I hate living in a stone city like Paris. Seven years ago, I didn’t feel that much about it. However, visiting again, I realize these stone buildings exhaust me a lot. Unlike Japanese houses made of wood, Stone buildings remain for more than numerous generations, so I do feel that residents died one after the other in these buildings. I can feel the birth and death of the people who lived within these stone buildings. This makes stone buildings tremendously heavy. Stone pavements are likewise. As far as I have researched, so

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<sup>65</sup> Endō and Satō, 2002: 29.

<sup>66</sup> Endō, 1955: 91.

much blood spilled by massacres is surely soaked into these old pavements of Paris.<sup>67</sup>

Amidst the presence of the medieval stone buildings, Endō came to understand the tradition of European Catholicism, the bloodline that kept Catholicism alive and that the Japanese were unable to merge with. He came to perceive Catholicism as “the blood of European spirituality”<sup>68</sup> through the strong sense of disjuncture. As other Japanese intellectuals had tried to do, Endō also sought some essential similarity between Japan and the West. Yet what he realized was only the irreconcilable distance that lay between a cathedral in Chartres and the *Hōryūji* Temple in Kyoto, and between the statues of St. Anna and *Miroku Bosatsu* (in Sanskrit *Maitreya*; a future Buddha of this world in Buddhist eschatology).<sup>69</sup> “Even if the external structure may be similar, the blood that flows within differs. The Japanese cannot be grafted into a different bloodline.”<sup>70</sup> In his debut novel *To Aden*, Endō described a Japanese suffering from a racial inferiority complex as possessing a strong sense of ugliness. However, these descriptions did not reflect his own experiences. In Paris, Endō had an intimate relationship with a French woman, Françoise who later lived in Japan and remained single even after Endō married a Japanese woman. Endō’s novel, *A Woman I Left Behind*, is regarded as being based on his experiences with her.<sup>71</sup>

Second, with a height of 176 centimeters, he was much taller than average among Japanese men of the time. While there were several elites who were physically very small, they did not seem to suffer any inferiority complex because of it.<sup>72</sup> Third, Endō’s fluency in French enabled him to become familiar with the French community, which also deepened his insights concerning the boundaries between Japan and the West. As a

<sup>67</sup> Endō and Satō, 1999c: 268.

<sup>68</sup> Endō and Satō, 1999e: 206.

<sup>69</sup> Endō, 1965: 301.

<sup>70</sup> Endō, 1965: 301.

<sup>71</sup> Katō, 2006.

<sup>72</sup> For example, Komura Jutarō (1855–1911), who studied at Harvard University and went on to become the Minister of Foreign Affairs during the Russo-Japanese War, was about 156 centimeters tall and was called the “Rat Minister.” Hanihara Masanao (1876–1934), who served as Japanese ambassador to the United States in the period of the enactment of the Japanese Exclusion Law, was dubbed “Little Hani” during his office in Washington D.C. Similarly, Shibusawa Eiichi (1840–1931), who was known as the “Father of Japanese capitalism,” was about 150 centimeters, while Yoshida Shigeru (1878–1967), who became Prime Minister in 1946, was only five centimeters taller. In spite of their height, none seemed to suffer from an inferiority complex. Thus, bodily size in itself was not a substantial factor in their sense of inferiority.



popular novelist and essayist, Endo had a tendency to dramatize events, yet that is exactly why his descriptions should be considered as a reflection of the socio-cultural atmosphere and of the sentiment that many Japanese had at the time. In other words, it can be said that Endo commanded a psychological depth to shed light on the inferiority complex that most of the Japanese intellectuals could not even verbalize. Other elites such as Mori Ōgai, Okakura Tenshin, Takahashi Korekiyo, Minakata Kumakusu, Noguchi Yonejirō and Leonard Foujita (Fujita Tsuguharu) also seemed to be spared an inferiority complex due to their fluency in foreign languages.

Yet it should be noted that linguistic ability also depends on the field of study, e.g. literature vs. science. In science, for example, where scientific data, numerical formulas, and chemical equations are commonly shared, the required level of linguistic ability does not seem to be as high as that required for the humanities. Thus it would be understandable that Etō Jun (1932–1999) also suffered from sense of isolation, disjuncture, and mental suffering during his stay in the West, in spite of the linguistic fluency which enabled him to teach Japanese Literature at Princeton University in 1963. In Endō's case, the fundamental struggle was rather personal and proved to be fatal—his religious experiences, namely the “unfillable gap” he felt between Japan and the West. His strong sense of disjuncture was what made it possible for Endō to shed light on the consciousness of racial distance. As Mark Williams states, what Endō sought to address in his work was the issue of “distance” between the two. For Endō, racial difference could be a mere metaphor for the visualized difference between Japan and the West.<sup>73</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Without light, only darkness remains and we cannot see anything. But light itself cannot be described. What we can describe is only whatever reflects light. Shadows surely exist. However, it is their presence that beckons the brightness of light.<sup>74</sup>

Inoue Yōji (1980)

Father Inoue Yōji (1927–), who boarded the same “cabin” with Endō in 1950 to join the Carmelites in France, said that what Endō sought in his whole

<sup>73</sup> Williams, 1997: 132–133.

<sup>74</sup> Inoue, 1980: 125.

work was “light.”<sup>75</sup> Light and Shadow are inseparable. They are necessary for each other’s existence. Therefore, it can be said that Endō’s personal experiences since childhood enabled him to shed light on the “shades and shadows” that other Japanese elites were unable to face. So what do the “shades and shadows” mean for Japan? What do the experiences of “shades and shadows” in the narratives of Japanese elites tell us?

All the narratives described in this chapter are closely associated with a strong sense of distance, inferiority and disjuncture towards the West. Kiyosawa, who spent years in the United States as a lower class worker and later became a journalist and diplomatic analyst believed that these escapist attitudes towards racial issues among Japanese elites came from their inferiority complex towards the West.<sup>76</sup> While an inferiority complex is generally regarded as a sense of inferiority towards oneself, it should rather be regarded as a sense of indignity and anger towards the lack of recognition of one’s worth.<sup>77</sup> As Japan’s rage about anti-Japanese legislation clearly shows, this inferiority complex was often manifest as anger which stemmed from the feeling of not being recognized, approved or admitted by the important “other.” It could also be said that “distance” and “recognition” are two sides of the same coin. When people are recognized by others as important, the sense of “distance” between them disappears. “Distance” comes with a sense of isolation, loneliness and anxiety, which in turn robs one of a sense of belonging and causes an inferiority complex. Japan saw that the identity of the nation was dependent upon Western powers. Originally “peripherally” situated alongside China until the mid-nineteenth century and similarly positioned in relation to the West afterwards, the sense of “instability” surrounding the identification of Japan has persisted. Japan sought to identify itself through the unstable “distance” between self and others as its “tradition.” This distance also implied a distance between the self and within oneself in the process of “westernization” Japan has undergone since the Meiji period.

Modern Japan in particular, which sought to “Quit Asia,” was forced to confront the unavoidable dilemma that it did not belong to either the East or the West. This brought a self-contradiction caused by “westernization” which could be regarded as “self-denial.” Therefore, the anxiety or instability that flowed through the roots of Japan always swayed between

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<sup>75</sup> Inoue, 1980: 125.

<sup>76</sup> Kitaoka, 2004.

<sup>77</sup> Kawai, 1971.

“strong superiority and inferiority complexes.”<sup>78</sup> The strong inferiority complex towards the West and strong sense of superiority towards other Asian countries are two sides of the same coin. While the anti-Japanese legislation of 1924 was regarded as the issue that placed a “stigma” on the face of the Japanese, it shocked the Japanese people deeply, given their sensitivity towards national pride. The real question is why they were so sensitive towards it. Certainly, there was the Japanese Government’s struggle over what to claim itself, caught between its racial categorization and its civilized status. As Hanihara persistently pointed out, Japan’s sense of honor as a civilized country was greatly damaged due to the racial discrimination it received from the United States.

Why was this racial discrimination such a tremendous insult to the elites, who did not care about “expediency” or about Japanese immigrants? For Japan’s identity as a civilized nation, which was strongly dependent on the West, the racial difference served as a crucial boundary that separated Japan from the West. In other words, the rage seen among the elites was fundamentally linked to the dilemma Japan had borne since the modern period: that Japan’s perception of itself as a civilized nation was undermined by the racial aspect that categorized the Japanese as being “colored.” This racial distance was considered to be the gap Japan could not fill with any degree of effort. This has been the fundamental dilemma and contradiction that Japan has faced since it chose “westernization” as a way to be itself. In conclusion, for the Japanese elites, the racial difference could also be seen as a metaphor for Japan’s self-contradiction borne since the modern period. In other words, racial differences were experienced, along with overlapping experiences of self-contradiction. The sentiments of the Japanese elites, such as anxiety, melancholy, and both intense inferiority and superiority reflected the ambivalence that arose between their strong sense of national pride and the self-denial that stemmed from the historical process of modern Japan.

Finally, in Endō’s work, where the tradition of European Catholicism was described with a bloodline, Endō also used the expression “a great river of Europe,” with which the Japanese were unable to merge.<sup>79</sup> Endō spent most of the rest of his life dedicated to his compilation *Deep River*, in which humans could be seen as a great river that was flowing towards some place they will never know. As described by Sonoda Hidehiro, in the endless circulation of this round world with no starting or ending

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<sup>78</sup> Oguma, 1995.

<sup>79</sup> Endō, 1989: 155.

points, every single river on earth flowed into the same sea where there were no starting or ending points; essentially a great river of human beings flowing in eternal circulation. Throughout Endō's perspective towards the eternal distance as embodied in both visible and invisible ways such as racial and religious differences, it is possible to clearly see how Endō sought the essential meaning of the "distance" for humans, and how he tried to shed light on the "shadow" that has caused countless conflicts in the past few centuries. A river flows into a sea where the river originally flowed from. This may also shed light on the search for where humans come from, where humans go, and what brings humans to the here and now.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### ANATOMICALLY SPEAKING: THE KUBO INCIDENT AND THE PARADOX OF RACE IN COLONIAL KOREA

Hoi-eun Kim

The month of June 1921 was a tumultuous period at Keijō Medical College, an elite medical school established by the Japanese Governor-General in colonial Korea. The Korean medical students enrolled in this college staged a school-wide strike, boycotting all lectures beginning June 4, and the school authorities responded promptly with severe punishment. On June 7, the school officials, in urgent consultation with the Government-General, decided to expel nine Korean students who were regarded as the main instigators and to suspend the remaining 181 students.

The student protest itself was not an exceptional event in colonial Korea. Throughout the colonial period, and especially after the March First Movement in 1919, there were constant outbreaks of student protests, with an average of around forty per year in the 1920s against various issues ranging from blatant discriminatory measures against Koreans through the lack of proper educational facilities to outright violence against Koreans.<sup>1</sup> In June of 1922, for instance, fifty junior and senior students at Boknae Normal School in the Posŏng region of Chōlla province started a protest by submitting a petition against the principal of the school, Morimoto Enjurō, who was said to have insulted the parents of students, missed school for several weeks without prior notice and kicked a sophomore student out of a window during a class.<sup>2</sup>

Although it prefaced a pattern of student protests in colonial Korea, the boycott at Keijō Medical College was not the same as other instances of

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I would like to express my gratitude to participants in the conferences, “Everyday Coloniality” (Research Institute of Comparative History and Culture, South Korea, November 2010) and “Medicine as a Medium of Multiple Modernities” (Halle University, Germany, March 2011), for their penetrating and perceptive comments on earlier versions of this chapter. Financial support for this research was provided by the Melburn G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research at Texas A&M University and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

<sup>1</sup> Kim, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> *Tonga Ilbo*, 22 June 1922.

colonial grievances in many ways. While most student protests happened at middle or high schools and involved, at best, only a limited percentage of the students, the protest at Keijō Medical College engaged the entire Korean medical student population at one of the two most prestigious medical schools in Korea. Furthermore, as they were not at the bottom of society, these medical students had a lot to lose. In other words, before Keijō Imperial University was founded in 1924 and took over the position of the best medical school in Korea, the graduates of Keijō Medical College could expect a certain, albeit limited, level of success as physicians. Thus, we must ask, why did these Korean students decide to fight against the school administrators, which was essentially professional suicide? To put it differently, what was at stake?

At the center of this confrontation was a derogatory remark by Kubo Takeshi, a professor of anatomy at the school and an expert in physical anthropology. When he found out on May 31 that a skull was missing after a lecture on anatomy that six first-year Korean students and four Japanese students had attended on May 26, Kubo accused the Korean students of the crime based on his expertise in the physical anthropology of the Korean people. Anatomically speaking, Kubo elaborated, Koreans were barbarians whose racial traits determined their historical development. Infuriated by this gross overgeneralization and prompted by the collective action of Japanese students accusing Koreans, Korean medical students verbally delivered Dr. Inamoto Kamegorō, the Chief of School Affairs, an ultimatum to be answered within forty-eight hours: one, to ask Kubo to deliver a detailed lecture on his racial theory and two, to find another anatomy professor.<sup>3</sup> When Kubo declined and the school, in turn, tried to deflect the criticism by asking him to take a few days off, there was no way out for the Korean students other than to start a boycott.

In this chapter, I argue that this seemingly innocuous academic brouhaha, which came to be known as the Kubo Incident, holds the key to our understanding of the paradox of race in colonial Korea under Japanese rule. In the process of discrediting ill-founded academic racism that, with the help of the scientific outlook of physical anthropology provided a justification for discrimination against Koreans within the Japanese empire, Korean students and intellectuals unwittingly internalized racial ideas and subsequently strengthened the flip-side of the Japanese racial discourse that emphasized the racial affinity between the Koreans and the

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<sup>3</sup> *Tonga Ilbo*, 3 June 1921: 3.

Japanese. I also maintain that the Kubo Incident not only shows us the ways and the channels through which the academic racism of Japanese imperialism was conceived and institutionalized, but also illuminates why racism in colonial Korea must always be analyzed in the context of Japan's search for its place in the greater scheme of global racial hierarchy in the evolving age of empires.

In analyzing the Kubo Incident, which poignantly reveals the pervasiveness of racial discourse in colonial Korea, this chapter fills a gap left by the recent surge in research on Japanese anthropology and its role in Japan's colonial endeavor. In his groundbreaking monograph on the intellectual lineage of Japanese self-perception, Oguma Eiji convincingly argues that the myth of ethnic homogeneity was a post-war invention rather than an idea inherited from the Meiji era, but fails to include the perspectives of the colonized.<sup>4</sup> Sakano Tōru's meticulous work on the activities of anthropologists in making and buttressing Japan's expanding empire suffers from the same problem.<sup>5</sup> E. Taylor Atkins illustrates the Japanese preoccupation with all things Korean, but his broad stroke leaves out the entire discipline of physical anthropology.<sup>6</sup> In turn, when historians have studied the Korean reaction to racial theories during the colonial era, they have invariably focused on prominent intellectuals such as Ch'oe Nam-sŏn.<sup>7</sup> Given this historiographical trend characterized by a metropole-, colonizer-, and luminary-centric approach, it is not surprising that Kubo Takeshi and Korean student protests against his racial theory have rarely received any attention other than a few passing remarks in a book on the history of modern medical education by Kee Chang Duk<sup>8</sup> and an article co-written by Seo Hong Gwan and Shin Jwa Seop.<sup>9</sup>

Putting Kubo and the incident he instigated under a historian's microscope in order to illustrate the multifaceted dimensions of racial science, I will start with a brief biography of Kubo Takeshi, the prime protagonist in this event, and then introduce his rather preposterous racial theory (based on physical anthropology) in the broader context of the development of anthropology in Japan. Finally, I will describe how his ideas were rebuked and refuted, yet subconsciously embraced by Korean students and intellectuals.

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<sup>4</sup> Oguma, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Sakano, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Atkins, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Chŏn, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Kee, 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Seo and Shin, 1999.



*Kubo Takeshi and the Physical Anthropology of Koreans*

Born on June 20, 1879 at Wajima-machi, Ishikawa-ken, Kubo Takeshi graduated from the Department of Medicine at the Fourth High School (present-day Kanazawa University) in November 1898 and earned his medical practitioner's license a month later in December 1898. After getting his medical degree and license, Kubo had further practical training in various places. In October 1899, he was appointed Assistant in Anatomy at the College of Medicine, Tokyo Imperial University, where he worked with Professor of Anatomy Koganei Yoshikiyo. In January 1901, after working in Tokyo for two years, Kubo was hired as an Assistant at the Kyoto Imperial University College of Medicine and was subsequently promoted to Instructor at the Aichi Prefectural Medical College of Nagoya in August 1903.<sup>10</sup>

Kubo's career trajectory then closely parallels the colonial expansion of the Japanese empire. In 1907 Kubo had his first chance to work in Korea, which had recently become a protectorate of Japan. At the behest of his teacher at Tokyo Imperial University, Kubo accepted a position as Instructor of Anatomy at Taikan Dispensary in Seoul, a hospital with a teaching faculty under the direct control of the Korean Residency-General.<sup>11</sup> Only a few months later, in January 1908, he was promoted to the position of Professor at the same dispensary and stayed in Seoul until September 1910.<sup>12</sup> After his three-year-long tenure in Korea, Kubo briefly returned to Japan to become a Professor of Anatomy at Kanazawa Medical College, a position he nominally held from August 1911 to December 1913. During this time, however, Kubo was commissioned to work in Manchuria, where he initially worked for the South Manchuria Railway Company and subsequently assumed the position of Professor at South Manchuria Medical College. During his stay in Manchuria, Kubo completed his doctoral dissertation on the physical anthropology of Koreans and submitted it to Tokyo Imperial University in 1913. He received his doctorate in 1914.<sup>13</sup> It is unclear whether Kubo intended to return to Japan or to remain in Manchuria, but the restructuring of the Korean educational system under the colonial government brought him to Seoul once again. With a medical doctorate and previous experience in Korea, Kubo was recruited for the

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<sup>10</sup> Iseki, 1926: 210–211.

<sup>11</sup> Kubo, 1913: 2.

<sup>12</sup> Iseki, 1926: 210–211.

<sup>13</sup> Iseki, 1926: 210–211.

job of Professor of Anatomy at the newly organized Government-General Hospital in Seoul, the descendant of the aforementioned Taikan Dispensary. When it finally opened in April 1916, Kubo was appointed as a Professor at Keijō Medical College.<sup>14</sup>

Kubo's movement from Korea to Manchuria and back to Korea might give the false impression that he was a second-tier doctor who could not secure a respectable academic position in Japan and as such had to test his fate in colonies. Quite the contrary. In fact, the strategic significance of Korea required the very best anatomist who could conduct meticulous and thorough anthropological research, and the publication of Kubo's doctoral dissertation by Tokyo Imperial University in 1913 testifies to his prowess as a researcher. As with other imperial universities, the medical faculty of Tokyo Imperial University published reports—*Mitteilungen aus der Medizinischen Fakultät der Kaiserlichen Universität zu Tokyo*—once every two or three years to chronicle and publicize the academic achievements of their faculty members and students. Because these reports were designed to include all the significant findings of the preceding two or three years (and as such, the more, the better), each routinely included more than ten full-length articles. The inaugural report of 1892 contained no fewer than twenty-four articles. Given this situation, it is quite remarkable that the faculty of medicine devoted an entire report (volume 12) to the publication of Kubo's 718 page doctoral dissertation, written entirely in German. Only the first part, containing the data, was included in volume 12 of the report. The second part, containing descriptions of the data, was published four years later in Keijō Medical College's 1917 report.<sup>15</sup>

The scientific significance of this dissertation, entitled "Contributions to the Physical Anthropology of the Koreans" [*Beiträge zur physischen Anthropologie der Koreaner*] was immediately recognized and duly noted by the scholarly community in Japan.<sup>16</sup> In February 1914, for example, the Journal of the Anthropological Society of Tokyo [*Jinruigaku Zasshi*] reported the publication of Kubo's work and his delivery of a lecture at South Manchuria Medical College in detail. "Until now," the journal claimed, "there were two or three studies based upon the measurement of stature with respect to the bodily constitution of Koreans. When it comes to the measurement of the entire body, E. Chante and E. Boudaret measured around

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<sup>14</sup> Iseki, 1926: 210–211.

<sup>15</sup> Kubo, 1917.

<sup>16</sup> Kubo, 1918.

one-hundred Korean males . . . this thorough and extensive study deserves everyone's congratulations."<sup>17</sup>

What was so remarkable about Kubo's anthropological research on Koreans, and for that matter, why were the Japanese so obsessed with "measurements" in the first place? To understand the meaning of his research, we need to step back and briefly consider the intellectual genealogy of modern anthropology in Japan, which is in itself a fascinating story of the global movement of knowledge and power in the late nineteenth-century's unfolding age of empires.

*Doctors of Empires and the Development of Anthropology in Japan*

With its primary task of elucidating and bestowing meaning on people without histories, anthropology as a discipline was the academic paraphernalia of modern imperialism. For those forcefully incorporated into the spheres of western powers from the seventeenth-century onwards, anthropologists found humanistic approaches utterly inadequate. Instead, anthropologists approached these people as artifacts or objects, akin to fauna and flora that need to be observed, dissected, and catalogued, and as such, they simply extended the methodologies of natural science to the study of other people. In this respect, it is not a coincidence that the first generation of anthropologists in both in Europe and Japan were physicians and natural scientists who had been trained in biology, botany, and zoology.<sup>18</sup>

The evolution of anthropology in Japan constituted a part of this global formation of anthropology as a discipline, but it also reflected the peculiarity of Japan as the only non-white modern imperial power that had narrowly missed its own colonial subjugation. Shortly after the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese Meiji government adopted German medicine as its official model and strove to master it by inviting a dozen German physicians to Japan and sending over a thousand Japanese students to Germany between 1868 and 1914. What came along with these doctors of empire was not just German medical science, but also its brainchild, German anthropology, known for its obsession with the study of race. From the late 1870s to the early 1880s, German anthropology changed radically. Throughout the 1860s, German anthropology still retained self-consciously liberal and

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<sup>17</sup> Anon., 1914: 87.

<sup>18</sup> Zimmerman, 2001.

cosmopolitan outlooks, but, from the late 1870s, as one historian argued, with the explicit adoption of the rigorous precepts of natural science, it betrayed a narrowly nationalistic and anti-humanistic stance.<sup>19</sup>

It was at this critical juncture in the history of anthropology that the first generation of Japanese anthropologists absorbed their methodological underpinnings. This was most poignantly revealed in the career of Koganei Yoshikiyo, the founding father of modern physical anthropology in Japan and the man to whom Kubo dedicated his doctoral dissertation.<sup>20</sup> Born in 1858 in Nagaoka, Koganei Yoshikiyo started his medical studies in 1872 at Tokyo Medical School, the predecessor of Tokyo Imperial University.<sup>21</sup> Medical education in Tokyo was still undergoing thorough Germanization under the leadership of German medical faculty members, and Koganei was required to learn the German language because all significant instruction was conducted in German by German physicians. Once admitted to the medical school, Koganei learned basic anatomy from Wilhelm Dönitz and pathology and gynecology from Erwin Baelz, the renowned German physician and anthropologist, who was also an active member of the Yokohama scholarly society called the German Society for the Natural History and Ethnology of East Asia.

Graduating from the University of Tokyo at the top of his class in 1880, Koganei began his research in Germany at the advice of Baelz, joining the group of almost 1,200 Japanese medical students who studied in Germany between 1868 and 1914. With the support of the Ministry of Education, Koganei studied anatomy with Wilhelm Waldeyer in Strasbourg and followed him to Berlin when Waldeyer accepted a position as Chair of Anatomy at the Charité Hospital, Berlin University's teaching hospital, in 1883. Waldeyer was certainly a distinguished anatomist, but he was best known as the long-standing Chairman of the Anthropological Society in Berlin—the central organization of German anthropology, which was founded to support the voluntary and extra-academic intellectual pursuits of physicians in the early 1860s. It is significant to our discussion of Japanese anthropology that Waldeyer's anatomical approach to anthropology clearly bespeaks the aforementioned transition of anthropology

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<sup>19</sup> Zimmerman, 2001. It should be noted that there is an ongoing controversy over the nature of German anthropology. Such revisionist accounts as H. Glenn Penny's espouse a relatively favorable view of German anthropology and temporally locate the shift from liberalism to ethnocentric imperialism around the turn of the century. See, H. Glenn Penny, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Kubo, 1913: 677.

<sup>21</sup> Iseki, 1926: 8–9.

from a liberal aspiration to an imperialist apparatus. In the professional views of Waldeyer, there were empirically discernible types that exhibited corresponding and unchanging essences—a recognition that provided a critical step in the development of essentialized racism where, once one is black or Jewish, one is black or Jewish forever and in accordance with pre-determined traits; there is no nuance, deviation, or reversion. The most persuasive and likely way to identify these racial components was through the accurate measurements of skulls and facial bones. Photographs were a possible solution, but Waldeyer shared his skepticism of the accuracy of photographic representation with his German colleagues. To eliminate any possibility of erroneous visual cues and to amass accurate measurements of skulls and skeletons, German anthropologists resorted to time-consuming and repetitive physical measurements.<sup>22</sup>

Baptized with the water of Waldeyer's German anthropology, Koganei began replicating his teacher's anthropological anatomy in his native country when he returned to Japan in 1885. As Kubo's career clearly reflected the territorial expansion of the Japanese empire towards the Asian mainland, Koganei's research corresponded to the period of the so-called "internal colonization" of Japan, i.e., the physical and conceptual incorporation of Ryukyu (Okinawa) and Hokkaido. Koganei was particularly intrigued by the Ainu tribe, and he made regular research trips to Hokkaido (often with his wife, who was a younger sister of Mori Ōgai, the literary giant, but more importantly a surgeon general in the Japanese army) to study the Ainu tribe from the perspectives of phrenology and morphological anthropology.<sup>23</sup>

In his study of the Ainu, which was intimately linked to the origin of the Japanese as a race (the so-called *nihon jinshuron*), Koganei was in direct confrontation with Tsuboi Shōgorō (1863–1913) who founded the first Japanese anthropological society in 1884 and subsequently studied in England. Unlike Tsuboi, who heavily relied on archaeological excavations and in many respects pursued anthropology as the hobby of an antiquarian, Koganei introduced a new methodology of physiognomic anatomy and emphasized that a proper understanding of Japanese origins could only be achieved through an ostensibly objective anthropology based on the diligent and meticulous measurement of skulls and physical body structures. This methodological innovation was amplified by the support of Baelz.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Zimmerman, 2001: 86–107.

<sup>23</sup> Takahashi, 1997.

<sup>24</sup> Suzuki, 1974.

Passionately engaging in the study of racial markers from the perspective of a physical anthropologist, Baelz made measurements of more than a few thousand Japanese people. In order to explain the interconnectivity of races in the Far East and in order to give an accurate picture of different races, he made extended anthropological expeditions to Korea (1899, 1902, and 1903) and Vietnam (1903) where he found, as Baelz put it, “so many semi-savage tribes” and “unpreserved game.”<sup>25</sup>

It was in this context of comparative anthropology as an aid in the quest of identifying the Japanese as a race that Kubo's research on Koreans was conceived and subsequently received by scholars in Japan. As Kubo clearly articulates in the preface to his dissertation, the aim of his research was “to determine whether and to which extent Koreans stand in their physical and anthropological relations to the Japanese.”<sup>26</sup> To clarify this connection as accurately as possible, Kubo conducted extensive measurements of living Korean bodies during his initial three-year tenure in Korea (1907 to 1910).

In his dissertation Kubo reveals that he measured a grand total of 3,425 Koreans. As if to remind us of the unequal power relations at the very heart of anthropology as an academic discipline, the objects—or, as anthropologists prefer, “materials” [*zairyō*]<sup>27</sup>—of his anthropological measurements were those who were deprived of their physical freedom, albeit temporarily: students, soldiers and prostitutes. In 1908, for example, Kubo measured 805 Korean students, taking advantage of various occasions such as the normal school entrance exam day on April 13, on which he measured eighty-five students. Similarly, in 1909 and 1910, he measured another 674 and 735 students respectively at five public schools and one private school. In addition, with the assistance of the Japanese military and police forces in Korea, Kubo also measured 651 Korean soldiers (former imperial guards aged between 15 and 37) from April 19 to May 26, 1909 and 560 female prostitutes aged 14 to 32 from June 1908 to October 1909.<sup>27</sup>

The benign word “measurement” does not do justice to the painstaking efforts of the anthropologists involved and does not reflect the estrangement and humiliation that the subjects had to endure. An anthropological measurement is much more than a simple notation of height and weight. It involves sophisticated equipment including an anthropometer and requires at least two rooms, one for actual observation and measurements

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<sup>25</sup> Baelz, 1932: 182.

<sup>26</sup> Kubo, 1913: 1.

<sup>27</sup> Kubo, 1913: 3–6.

and another for changing clothes.<sup>28</sup> Using equipment that he purchased from Zurich at the recommendation of Koganei and applying Schmidt's 1888 *Anthropologischen Methoden*, as well as the work of such renowned anthropologists as Rudolf Virchow and Felix Ritter von Luschan, Kubo conducted no less than 105 measurements for each individual and made eleven indexes.<sup>29</sup> The overall body received twelve measurements, while the head alone received thirty-two, including the length and width of the head, the distance between the eyes (inside and outside), the height and depth of the nose and the length of the ear. As such, it took a while for Kubo to "get the hang of it." On the first day of his soldier measurements (19 April 1909), Kubo measured and recorded only ten men. Even with the help of an assistant he used from the second day onwards, the measurements took a total of thirty-nine days to complete.<sup>30</sup>

Measuring the bodies of female prostitutes was even more challenging because Kubo was essentially trying to take advantage of their monthly examinations for venereal diseases carried out by the police doctor, K. Yamamoto. As he could not disturb the main task, Kubo embraced two-step procedures. First, while Yamamoto checked the prostitutes for venereal diseases, Kubo "secretly" observed external reproductive organs (the color of genitalia, the shape of pubic hairs, etc.). This served another purpose for him as well. Since these ladies had already exposed their private parts to him, Kubo maintained, they would not necessarily feel ashamed when he observed and measured other body parts.<sup>31</sup> Kubo completed his measurements during the short breaks between the main examinations.<sup>32</sup> His observations lasted from June 1908 to September 1909, involving thirteen visits over twenty-six days.

Logistical and technical difficulties aside, Kubo did not encounter any active resistance from his 3,425 dehumanized "materials." The overwhelming presence of school officials, military and police officers must have immediately rendered any attempt of resistance futile, but Kubo rather proudly ascribed the overall success to his deceptive tactic of invoking the image of a healing doctor:

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<sup>28</sup> Anthropometer is an instrument for measuring the human trunk and limbs and calculating their dimension. It consists of a calibrated, vertical rod to which are attached two horizontal arms (one fixed and one movable).

<sup>29</sup> Kubo, 1913: 16.

<sup>30</sup> Kubo, 1913: 39.

<sup>31</sup> Kubo, 1913: 40.

<sup>32</sup> Kubo, 1913: 37.



Fortunately, I did not encounter any difficulties with these observations . . . Not a single Korean has refused to be measured, because I used the pretext that my work is indispensable in researching cures for them. In addition, it was easy and convenient to always carry a stethoscope like a practicing physician would so I could create the belief that it was a matter of medical research.<sup>33</sup>

Though not used in his dissertation, Kubo also collected bones and engaged in dissection during his stay in Korea to aid him in his efforts to identify “the anatomy of the Koreans.” When Kubo came to Seoul in 1907, a new road was being constructed in Yongsan. As a result, skeletons and bone parts were being discovered every day. Kubo moved down to Yongsan and collected nineteen complete skeletons, six incomplete skeletons, 222 complete skulls, and forty-five incomplete skulls. Furthermore, from 1908 to 1910, Kubo dissected twenty-three cadavers (three Japanese males, nineteen Korean males, and one Korean female).<sup>34</sup> The signing of a contract in September 1909 between the then Vice Minister of Justice of Korea and the Japanese Governor-General that allowed the dissection of the cadavers of those who were put to death, those who had died of disease, and those who had no relatives for anatomical study helped his research greatly.<sup>35</sup>

Written in German, Kubo’s dissertation was certainly not intended to be read by laypeople. Complementing his work on the hard parts of living Koreans, such as bones and heads, Kubo also measured the “soft” parts of cadavers (i.e., various muscles including internal organs, intestines, and even blood vessels) from 1916 onwards, and completed eighty-one males and eleven females by July 1918. Meanwhile, Kubo actively publicized his ideas between 1916 and 1920 by contributing twenty-four submissions of various lengths to *Chōsen oyobi Manshū*, one of the most widely read monthly magazines in colonial Korea.<sup>36</sup> In the pages of this magazine, which was regarded as the equivalent of *Taiyō* or *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin* in mainland Japan in terms of its scope and readership, Kubo explored topics ranging from the anthropology of hair, through a comparative study of Chinese and Koreans, to an anatomical description of the female constitution. In addition, Kubo continued to publish in academic journals. The second half of his dissertation, the descriptive section on heads, was published in Seoul in 1917, and a few articles written in both German and

<sup>33</sup> Kubo, 1913: 6.

<sup>34</sup> Kubo, 1913: 10.

<sup>35</sup> Kubo, 1913: 10.

<sup>36</sup> Im, 2007.

Japanese came to light in such venues as *Mitteilungen aus der medizinischen Hochschule zu Keijō*, *Journal of the Chōsen Medical Association*, and *Jūzenkai Zasshi*.<sup>37</sup>

Although Kubo's work exemplified the culmination of a Japanese physical anthropology that had been developed by German and German-educated physicians-cum-anthropologists, his anatomical anthropology was flawed from its very inception. Fundamentally, Kubo's observation and theory suffered from racial reductionism, attributing all social, cultural, economic, and intellectual differences to the pre-determined racial categories of Korean and Japanese. In other words, in Kubo's mind, Koreans and Japanese were already distinct ethnic, racial, and national groups hiding their immutable racial traits. As such, whenever Kubo found something unique in his measurements of "Koreans," he readily assigned an inferior status to it. This tendency was most pronounced when Kubo attempted to associate racial traits with cultural and social development levels. After measuring and comparing the muscles of Koreans and Japanese, for example, Kubo argued that the development of the mastication muscles, digestive organs, respiratory organs, and reproductive organs among Koreans correlated with their primitive level of culture and civilization.

Seen from our twenty first century perspective, it is apparent that Kubo's racial determinism sounds crude and far-fetched despite its ostentatious paraphernalia of scientific inquiry. Contemporary observers—students at Keijō Medical College and intellectuals of colonial Korea—also immediately recognized the unsavory agenda of creating and supporting a strict racial hierarchy hidden beneath the sleek cloak of science. When they directed their criticism at Kubo rather than at racial science itself, however, Korean students and intellectuals inadvertently tricked themselves into the discursive trap of Japanese racism.

### *The Möbius Strip: The Paradox of Race in Colonial Korea*

At the outset of the 1921 protest, school officials tried to blanket the students' grievances against Kubo by arguing that any ill-received remarks were probably due to his hot temper and that he had no sinister intentions. To begin with, the Chief of School Affairs, Inamoto, brushed off the demands of the students by saying that Korean students simply misunderstood

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<sup>37</sup> Kubo, 1917; Kubo, 1917–1922; Kubo, 1918; Kubo, 1919a; Kubo, 1919b; Kubo, 1921; Kubo, 1922; Kubo, 1923.

Kubo's remarks when he was asked of his opinion by *Mai-il-Shinpo* on June 3. "The whole event is nothing to worry about," said Inamoto. "Kubo did not really mean it, and when he mentioned that Korean national character was stupid, it was not just directed at Korean students but also at Japanese students. Whether Korean or Japanese, the soil and climate of the Korean peninsula has adverse effects on national traits, and both Korean and Japanese students should pay attention to that deteriorating change. That was Kubo's real intention."<sup>38</sup> Faculty members such as Ueda, Kuroda, and Kudō all echoed Inamoto when they gave exhortative addresses to Korean students. Even Kubo himself apologized and admitted that he might have gone overboard with his accusation of Korean students. To the group of students assembled in the school auditorium, Kubo claimed that he was simply out of his mind. "Because I study too hard, I often suffer from hallucinations. On that particular day, it appears that I was not focused, and if I really said that, I'd like to take it back."<sup>39</sup>

With the tension escalating and the Korean students remaining firm in their demands, however, the school officials swiftly changed their tone from reconciliatory and apologetic to accusatory and downright hostile. They accused the students of violently encroaching upon the academic freedom of a well-trained scholar. The dean of the college, Shiga Kiyoshi, who had been using convalescence from a car accident as an excuse to avoid a direct confrontation with the protesting students,<sup>40</sup> made this clear when he sent his own ultimatum to the students on June 6. "Professor Kubo has been diligently conducting research on the Korean people [朝鮮民族] for several years and is capable of academically proving the degradation of the Korean people from the state of civilization to that of barbarism," argued the dean in a letter read by Inamoto on his behalf. "If you are audacious enough to confront him, you need to engage him academically; instead, you're simply defying [him] through violence." Apparently furious, the dean ended his letter with a stern warning: "You'd better come to school tomorrow with your books and attend lectures. If you refuse to do so, we will consider you recalcitrant students and expel or suspend you. So think wisely."<sup>41</sup>

He was not bluffing. On the following day, June 7, the school summarily expelled nine students and suspended the remaining 181 indefinitely.

<sup>38</sup> *Mai-il-Shinpo*, 3 June 1921: 3.

<sup>39</sup> *Mai-il-Shinpo*, 4 June 1921: 3.

<sup>40</sup> Kim, 2007.

<sup>41</sup> *Mai-il-Shinpo*, 7 June 1921: 3.

In turn and in solidarity with the expelled students, those suspended decided to leave the school voluntarily. Instead of accepting their voluntary withdrawal, however, school officials took a few students in and questioned their intentions. Frustrated at seeing their stories falling on the deaf ears of school officials, students then went to the Government-General to appeal their case. But here, again, they were greeted with hostile responses. "I don't know all the details, but when I hear you today, I cannot accept any of your demands," replied Matsumura Matsumori, Chief of Academic Affairs of the Government-General of colonial Korea. He further rebuked what he considered to be the students' willful disregard of scientific inquiry: "What Professor Kubo was arguing was based on his scholarly research; you cannot revolt against him simply because you feel insulted. In fact, even the Japanese often hear that they are barbarians compared to westerners. This assessment certainly hurts the pride of Japanese professors, but they swallow it because it's a scientific fact." Adding insult to injury, Matsumura asked a rhetorical question: "Why can't we declare that Koreans are backward compared to the Japanese in Japan? It's a fact."<sup>42</sup>

The school and colonial administrators might have viewed any disobedience as a violent repudiation of authorities. Yet their perception was far from the truth to an almost libelous extent. In fact, from the very beginning of the confrontation, the student body clearly made their arguments in the form of academic disputation, as we can judge from the initial message delivered to Inamoto on June 1. The students made the point of contention much more explicit when they published the Resolution of a Student Strike on June 4. In this strongly worded yet carefully crafted resolution, students reminded Kubo and the school administrators of the lecture that Kubo delivered at one of the meetings of the Chōsen Medical Association, the flagship academic society of physicians in Korea:

We have long pointed out that Dr. Kubo's argument rests on a flimsy basis... To name one or two examples, Dr. Kubo gave a lecture at the Chōsen Medical Association where he maintained that the under-development of facial expression muscles proves the racial inferiority of Koreans as a whole. Furthermore, using statistical data acquired by researching only three Koreans, Dr. Kubo argued publicly that well-developed mastication muscles corroborate the barbarity of the Koreans as a race. Whereupon there was a poignant question from the audience: 'How do you explain the

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<sup>42</sup> *Tonga Ilbo*, 9 June 1921.

fact that Koreans have brachycephalic heads that, anatomically speaking, are believed to be a sign of high civilization?"<sup>43</sup>

By recreating and relishing the atmosphere of what was probably an embarrassing moment for Kubo at a well-respected academic venue, Korean medical students called attention to the theoretical and empirical paucity of Kubo's anatomical research. They based their case for their protest and the dismissal of Kubo on the idea that Kubo did not live up to the standard of an elite medical school. "As fledgling students," the resolution read, "our level of expertise in science is low. Yet we deserve to have a world-class natural scientist as our teacher . . . It is not acceptable for a scientist like Dr. Kubo to teach at a prestigious school like the Keijō Medical College." Students also made it clear that the protest was not simply a matter of nationalist feeling. "We are members of the Korean people, but, more importantly, we are students studying science."<sup>44</sup> In doing so, they made it clear that what was at stake was the sanctity of science, a principle that any institution of higher education was expected to uphold.

By targeting ill-executed research rather than the validity of racial science itself, and by implying that Koreans used to have an equal, if not higher, level of civilization than the Japanese, however, the students unwittingly strengthened the flip-side of Japanese colonial and racial policy—the belief that Koreans should remain annexed because they were racially akin to the Japanese people and, as such, could only develop their potential to its fullest extent under Japanese tutelage.

As documented extensively in recent scholarship on Japanese national and racial identity, the duality of Japanese racism was the result of the peculiarity of Japan as the only non-white modern imperial power. Because there was no visible marker separating them and their colonial subjects, at least on the level of skin pigmentation, Japanese scholars (and especially anthropologists) had to find a solution to the paradox: the Japanese as a race should be distinct from Koreans in order to legitimize Japan's colonial rule, but, in order to reinforce the territorial and psychological integrity of the empire, Koreans should be linked to the Japanese racially and culturally. The answer to this paradox was equally paradoxical: the boundaries of the Japanese race needed to remain functionally impervious while seemingly malleable. In other words, as long as Koreans were defining themselves in racial terms that intrinsically assumed

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<sup>43</sup> *Tonga Ilbo*, 6 June 1921.

<sup>44</sup> *Mai-il-Shinpo*, 6 June 1921.

a developmental hierarchy, they were all operating within the discursive trap of Japanese racism.

Like the Korean students who fell into this trap by only arguing against the inaccurate and malicious depiction of their racial characteristics rather than the overall racialization of the Korean people, the interested public who was closely following the event through detailed reports in the major daily newspapers of colonial Korea such as the *Tonga Ilbo* and the *Mai-il-Shinpo*, had also followed the same route by focusing on the bad science symbolized by Kubo rather than the concept of race itself. In an opinion piece published on the front page of the June 13 issue of *Mai-il-Shinpo*, "On the Student Strike at the Medical College," Sin Sök-Hyu clearly betrayed the difficulties of finding an effective way out of the crude racism based on a seemingly scientific methodology.

To criticize Kubo, Sin began by arguing that all the phenomena of the natural world were governed by the "law of nature," an absolute, axiomatic basis. One of the key features of this law of nature, according to Sin, was the immutability of species. "No matter how advanced modern science and no matter how refined human wisdom, it is impossible to turn a human into an animal or flora into humans. It is against the law of nature," wrote Sin. This law did not only apply to inter-species transformations, but also to intra-racial evolution. "If a certain race is bestowed with skeletons and muscles that bespeak of civilization," Sin articulated, "it is impossible to turn them into the bones and muscles of barbarism." A natural extension of this argument is, of course, the impossibility transforming a civilized nation into a barbarous nation. According to Sin, once a nation becomes civilized, it remains civilized, and there is no way around this. In Sin's opinion, therefore, Kubo's critical mistake was to argue against this law of nature, upholding the idea of Korean racial degeneration. "Now Dr. Kubo argues that he can academically prove the deterioration of Koreans, from a civilized nation in ancient times to a barbarous nation in the early modern era. Does this mean that while Koreans had big bones and strong muscles in ancient times, they suddenly have brittle bones and fragile muscles in modern times? Why not white hair and black skin in ancient times and black hair and red skin in modern times?"<sup>45</sup>

Pointing out the internal discrepancy of Kubo's racial theory was one thing, but Sin also had to resolve his own contradiction—if it was not the racial deterioration of Koreans, how could he explain the relative

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<sup>45</sup> *Mai-il-Shinpo*, 13 June 1921.

underdevelopment of Korea that ultimately made it into a Japanese colony? Sin tried to deal with this enigma by devising a distinction between “uncivilized” and “barbarous.” According to Sin, “uncivilized assumes a not fully developed humanity” whereas “barbarous suggests a lack of humanity, a status slightly above the level of animals.” To put it differently, Sin further elaborated, “uncivilized is like a clouded afternoon. Once the clouds dissipate, we are back to daylight. In contrast, barbarous is like a dark night. There might be moonlight, but it’s impossible to move away from darkness.” The analogy is self-evident—Korea is temporarily uncivilized, but is destined to become a civilized nation once again. As such, and in accordance with Sin’s logic, Kubo’s fundamental fallacy was “calling a clouded afternoon night.”

What is rather striking and pertinent to our discussion of internalized racism is that Sin’s argument resembles the rhetoric of the Civilization and Enlightenment movement of Meiji Japan that, as historian Andre Schmid has demonstrated, captured the imagination of Korean reformers at the end of the nineteenth century and subsequently provided an ideological justification for the annexation of Korea by Japan.<sup>46</sup> By describing Korea as a “clouded afternoon,” Sin essentially rendered it Japan’s “dark continent” requiring enlightening and awakening by Japan’s modernity, a discourse that constituted the core of Japanese imperialist ideology. “If Koreans are barbarians, it is a waste of state resources to teach Koreans, because it is impossible to bring them to civilization.” In writing this sentence, Sin must have thought that he was penetrating the heart of the colonial educational policy, but it reveals much more, and particularly how thoroughly he was enveloped in the developmental scheme of colonial modernization.

Despite the persistent attempts of the school and colonial administrators to trivialize the event and to label the students as oppressors of academic freedom, these Korean medical students made their protest as a fundamentally academic one—crusading against bad science. By rebutting racial essentialization with another variant of racial concepts, however, students and Korean intellectuals dragged the argument into the mud of racism where there was no way out other than supporting the general cause of Japanese colonial policy in Korea.

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<sup>46</sup> Schmid, 2002.



*Conclusion*

Well into the third week of June, the prospect of an amicable solution to the student protest seemed remote. After receiving the news of immediate expulsion and suspension on June 7, students went to the Government-General to appeal their case. However, rather than a sympathetic Governor-General, what awaited them were police officers from the nearby Tongdaemun police station.<sup>47</sup> Arrested and interrogated for violating regulations regarding open-air meetings, students were bullied into stopping the collective action. With no other options at hand, many of the frustrated students decided to move to the countryside, saying “it is better to till the soil in the countryside than to receive dysfunctional education.”<sup>48</sup>

While both students and school and colonial administrators clung to their original positions, the alumni association and the students’ parents stepped in to mediate. At the urgent meeting held at the Enlightenment Club on June 11, the alumni elected six representatives and charged them with finding a solution. These representatives asked the school for two things: to ask Kubo to admit his blunder and to repeal the expulsion and suspension of the students on the condition that they not force the dismissal of Kubo as a faculty member. The alumni also exhorted the students to return to class as long as Kubo offered a genuine apology.<sup>49</sup> The parents added their voices, suggesting that students immediately return to school, leaving their fate at the school’s hands.<sup>50</sup>

With the alumni and their parents pushing for a quick return to normality, the students found themselves under mounting pressure not just from them, but also from a public which was initially on their side. In an editorial published on June 22, the *Mai-il-Shinpo* admonished the students, basically telling them “enough is enough.” “You are the ones who are hungry and thirsty for knowledge,” the editorial states, “just as those who are hungry and thirsty crave only food and water and do not have the luxury of debating the difference between kind and unkind, if you really want to study, you should return to school immediately.”<sup>51</sup> Three days later, the daily newspaper ran a feature article describing “an epidemic of student strikes” that ensnared major institutions of higher education in colonial

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<sup>47</sup> *Tonga Ilbo*, 9 June 1921.

<sup>48</sup> *Mai-il-Shinpo*, 14 June 1921.

<sup>49</sup> *Mai-il-Shinpo*, 15 June 1921.

<sup>50</sup> *Mai-il-Shinpo*, 18 June 1921.

<sup>51</sup> *Mai-il-Shinpo*, 22 June 1921.

Korea following the one at Keijō Medical College. Defining rampant student strikes as a disease, the author emphasized that no matter how justified the cause, collective actions were illegal and only harmed the image of Korean students, discrediting their reliability and credibility.<sup>52</sup>

Faced with pressure from all sides, the medical students had no choice other than to capitulate. On June 25, the parents and alumni pleaded with the school to let the students return immediately. In return, the school officials, who saved face with the help of the mediators, nullified the decision to expel and suspend students. With the return of the students on June 27, the month-long confrontation that even Governor-General Saitō Makoto could not (or would not) reconcile finally came to an end.

Unlike the Korean medical students who had to endure a humiliating defeat, Kubo appears to have been unscathed. Not only did he keep his job, he continued to take part in academia. In September 1921, for example, Kubo participated in a special lecture series organized by the Chōsen Ishi-kai and delivered a lecture on a comparative study of the fingerprints of Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese—a topic of his lifelong pursuit.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, lauded as a beacon of academic freedom, he was even given an opportunity to spend a year in Europe. However, at this blossoming moment in his life, fate had suddenly turned against him. On May 17, 1922, the *Yomiuri Shinbun* of Japan, which had long kept silent on the entire event, published an article with the rather bizarre title “Professor Gone Mad.” According to this chapter, in early April of 1922, Kubo was ordered to travel to Europe for academic research. His enthusiasm about going abroad, however, had apparently driven Kubo insane, and on April 11 he was admitted into a facility for psychiatric treatment.<sup>54</sup>

With this rather tragic turn of events in mind, it is quite tempting to dismiss Kubo as a lunatic, and this has indeed been the general interpretation among historians. But to do so is to gloss over an important chapter in the development of Japanese colonial rule at the quotidian level. Occurring at the critical juncture of the transformation of the racial idea from one of emphasizing the distinctiveness of the Japanese people to that of embracing the common ancestry and racial affinities between the Japanese and the Koreans, the Kubo Incident symbolizes the permutations of racial theory from Europe via Japan to Korea and how it functioned as a powerful tool of colonial domination. On a general level, it tells us

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<sup>52</sup> *Mai-il-Shinpo*, 25 June 1921.

<sup>53</sup> *Tonga Ilbo*, 29 September 1921.

<sup>54</sup> *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 17 May 1922.

that racism in Korea needs to be analyzed beyond the binary interaction between Japan and Korea, since Japan's colonialism was in itself a product of Japan's own coloniality. Developed in the context of Japan's search for their place in the greater scheme of a global racial hierarchy in the evolving age of empires, Japanese anthropology was a reincarnation of German anthropology and continued to rely on external authority to justify its scientific basis. On a more concrete level, the Kubo Incident shows us that by being deeply embedded in racial discourses, Koreans could not find a way out of the Möbius strip of Japan's racial and colonial policies.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### WHO CLASSIFIED WHOM, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE? THE “JAPANESE” IN NORTHEAST CHINA IN THE AGE OF EMPIRE

Mariko Asano Tamanoi

In *Primitive Classification* (1905) Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss argue that the classificatory function, “the procedure which involves classifying things, events, and facts about the world into kinds and species, subsuming them one under the other and determining their relations of inclusion or exclusion,” has never been an innate individual activity regardless of time (history) and place (culture).<sup>1</sup> The way in which their contemporaries (and we who live in the early twenty first century) understand and practice it, i.e., arranging things in groups with clearly determined lines of demarcation is therefore of a “relatively recent” origin even in modern industrial societies.<sup>2</sup> This means that “our present notion of classification has not only a history, but a history that in itself implies a considerable prehistory.”<sup>3</sup> However, Durkheim and Mauss also acknowledge that “even today, a considerable part of our popular literature, our myths and our religions are based on a fundamental confusion of all images and ideas,” and they interpret such confusion as a survival of the “primitive” tradition.<sup>4</sup> Then, turning their diachronic approach into a synchronic approach, they argue that in “the entire Far East” (in addition to modern India), this practice of “metamorphoses,” “the transformation of the most heterogeneous things one into another” is extremely widespread.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, they argue, “in the least evolved societies known,” an even more general mental confusion is quite common, one in which the individual himself loses his personality and transforms it into his exterior

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<sup>1</sup> Durkheim and Mauss, 1963: 4. The book’s original title was “On Some Primitive Forms of Classifications: A Contribution to the Study of Collective Representations.” It was later translated into English by Rodney Needham and published as *Primitive Classification* (Needham, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> Durkheim and Mauss, 1963: 4.

<sup>3</sup> Durkheim and Mauss, 1963: 5.

<sup>4</sup> Durkheim and Mauss, 1963: 5.

<sup>5</sup> Durkheim and Mauss, 1963: 6.

soul or into his totem.<sup>6</sup> *Primitive Classification* has taught many generations of anthropologists an important lesson: we must “see the world as it is constituted by the people themselves,” and to this end we must learn these people’s language and apprehend their mode of classification.<sup>7</sup> Here, however, we must remember that both Durkheim and Mauss lived in the golden age of modern colonialism, during which colonial agents (including anthropologists) governed a vast territory of the world through what Bernard Cohn has called “the gradual extension of ‘officializing’ procedures,” defining and classifying space, separating public and private spheres, recording transactions such as the sale of property, *counting and classifying the colonized populations*, replacing religious institutions as the registrar of births, marriages and deaths and standardizing languages and scripts.<sup>8</sup>

In this chapter, I will reconsider the key ideas presented in *Primitive Classification* in the context of Manchukuo, the puppet state created and governed by the Japanese in Northeast China (Manchuria) between 1932 and 1945. In Manchukuo, those who participated in the “counting and classifying” of its population were the Japanese, yet this process was substantially complicated because: (1) the Japanese state did not present Manchukuo as its colony but as an independent nation state; and (2) the influx of Japanese immigrants to Manchukuo created the conditions in which the Japanese had to classify the Japanese. Restated, the constructed category of the “Japanese” were not only the “colonial settlers” but also “Manchukuo’s citizens,” the category that included “Chinese,” “Koreans,” “Japanese,” “Russians,” and so on. By examining the classification systems of Manchukuo’s population created by the Japanese, I would like to discuss how the Japanese struggled in drawing a boundary around them, and how they employed their power, including the power to “metamorphose” others as well as themselves, to create self-perceptions that were not necessarily uniform. After all, it was not the “primitiveness” of the Japanese but their colonial power that classified the population in Manchukuo in the ways it did.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Durkheim and Mauss, 1963: 6.

<sup>7</sup> Needham, 1963: viii.

<sup>8</sup> Cohn, 1996: 3, the emphasis is mine.

<sup>9</sup> This chapter does not fully consider one of the most important lessons offered by Durkheim and Mauss, namely, the need to “see the world as it is constituted for the people themselves,” i.e., for people other than the “Japanese” who also lived in Manchukuo. For the “Chinese” views on the “Manchu” in Manchukuo see Shao, 2005.

While it was the Japanese who classified the colonized people, we should ask who those people governed by the Japanese in Manchukuo actually were. To answer this question, I will begin this chapter with a brief sketch of the region's history. I will then divide the rest of this chapter into two, under the titles "Who Classified Whom? Part 1" and "Who Classified Whom? Part 2." Part 1 reviews the classification systems created by the government officials in the metropolis and in Manchukuo, while Part 2 examines the systems created by the Japanese anthropologists employed by the Japanese state. I note, however, that there was a substantial overlap between these two groups of categorizing agents. In my conclusion, I will discuss *what* shaped the Japanese classification systems. I will also return to the key ideas on classification presented by Durkheim and Mauss.

Anyone who works on "race" and "ethnicity" faces a thorny translation problem, which in this case is between English and Japanese.<sup>10</sup> Throughout this chapter, I primarily use "race" for the Japanese terms (*min*)*zoku*, *jinshu*, *shuzoku*, and *kokumin*, which appear very frequently in the classification systems. In so doing, I would like to maintain some fluidity of translation while stressing the following: (1) I do not accept the practice of separating "race" (for *jinshu* and *shuzoku*) from "ethnicity" (for *minzoku*) or "nationality" (for *kokumin*); (2) the rigid distinction between "(biological) race" (that could entail matters of biological descent, physical appearance and congenital inheritance) and "(cultural) ethnicity" (that entails matters of language and customs) could be misleading; and (3) there is no objective reality behind any of these concepts, since they are imagined.<sup>11</sup>

### *A Brief History of Northeast China (Manchuria)*

*Manchuria*, the term that the current Chinese government has replaced with *dongbei* [Northeast China] or *wei-man* [false Manchuria], seems to have originated in the *Manchu* people who have resided in the northeastern region of China since time immemorial. Yet, in the early seventeenth century the Manchu emperors established the Qing empire to the south of the Great Wall. Despite the generations of Qing emperors who tried to "turn their own homeland [to the north] into a preserve of Manchu heritage unspoiled by Chinese or other foreign immigration,"<sup>12</sup> the "Han

<sup>10</sup> On this translation problem, see, for example, Dikötter, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> See Doak, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Duara, 2003: 41.

Chinese” began immigrating to Manchuria in increasing numbers, transforming the region into “the great migration ground of the Han Chinese for centuries.”<sup>13</sup> Japanese imperialism reached this area at the turn of the twentieth century, when Japan won the wars—first with China, then with Russia—and obtained the latter’s southern tip as a war indemnity.

The history of Japan’s expansion onto the Chinese continent between 1905 and 1931 has been the topic of several well-researched books.<sup>14</sup> Hence I will only introduce the major events that took place during this time. First and foremost is the end of the Qing dynasty in 1911. The internal turmoil in China gave foreign powers more opportunities to further encroach into Manchuria and China. Second is the Japanese military’s participation in the joint Allied intervention in the Russian Revolution in 1917–18. Although this intervention failed, the prolonged stay of the Japanese military in Siberia “enabled the Japanese troops to move freely throughout almost all of China.”<sup>15</sup> Third is the growing challenge of Chinese nationalism to Japan’s expansion. When the regional warlords of Manchuria began joining this movement, the Japanese military took decisive actions and created Manchukuo in 1932, a purportedly independent nation state under Japanese imperial tutelage. Hence, by the time Manchukuo was built, the population of Manchuria was mostly “Han Chinese” (approximately 96 percent of the total population), and clearly outnumbered the “Manchu” who had by then more or less assimilated the life style of the “Han Chinese.”

The Japanese population constituted less than one percent of the total population of Manchuria—about 30 million—before 1932. During the Manchukuo era, however, this percentage rose to about 2.5 percent (while the total population reached almost 40 million).<sup>16</sup> The expanding colonial state apparatus, namely the Manchukuo government, the South Manchuria Railway Company, and the Kwantung Army needed more personnel from Japan.<sup>17</sup> The railway and urban construction boom attracted many

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<sup>13</sup> Lattimore, 1935: 3.

<sup>14</sup> McCormack, 1977; Young, 1998; Matsusaka, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Hata, 1988: 281.

<sup>16</sup> Yamanaka, 2005: 168, 183; see also Okabe, 1992: 521–522.

<sup>17</sup> The Kwantung Army was established as a result of the Japanese army’s defense of the South Manchuria Railway Company tracks at the end of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Over time, this military force gradually became a massive institution charged with protecting Manchuria from the Chinese nationalist movement spreading throughout China and from the threat posed by the post-1917 Soviet Union. See Young, 1998: 30; see also Yamaguchi, 1967: 8; Shimada, 1965; Coox, 1989.



fortune seekers from Japan.<sup>18</sup> In addition, a total of about 322,000 farmers crossed the Sea of Japan in order to acquire land in Manchukuo. The population of Manchukuo, however, did not solely consist of three “races,” viz. “Japanese,” “Han Chinese,” and “Manchu.” Due to the increasing interests of Russia, Britain, and the United States in the region, Manchuria became a multinational place by the 1940s. John Stephan thus writes:

There were thirty-seven million ‘Manchukuoans’ (Han Chinese and Manchus), 1,130,000 Japanese (including about 300,000 Kwantung Army personnel), a million Mongols, a million Koreans, 38,000 ‘White Russians’ (exiles or émigrés from the USSR), and communities of Germans, Jews, Ukrainians, Poles and Crimean Tartars, not to mention British, American, French, and Italian expatriates [in Manchuria in 1939].<sup>19</sup>

In addition, Stephan writes, approximately 2,000 *nikkeis*, Japanese who had immigrated to the United States and Hawaii emigrated once more but to Manchuria.<sup>20</sup> Thus, classifying the population of Manchukuo became an extraordinary difficult task for the Japanese.

### *Who Classified Whom? Part 1*

The employees of the Manchukuo government and its research departments produced numerous articles and reports concerning the races in Manchuria and the relations among them. However, the variety of racial nomenclatures that appear in these documents seems to generate more questions and fewer answers. If Manchukuo was, at least to the Japanese leaders, an independent nation state rather than a puppet-state, where were the “Manchukuoans”? Could the inhabitants of Manchuria easily distinguish, for example, the “Han Chinese” from the “Manchu”? Was it possible for Japanese leaders to do the same? If so, how? In addition, the names themselves do not tell us why those named groups came to reside in Manchuria, where they settled, how they related to each other once settled, or how large each named group was. Bearing these questions in mind, let me first examine some relevant historical documents.

A chapter in the *Yearbook of Manchuria Colonization*, published in 1940 offers the following explanation of the history of Manchuria. This history is written in a clear, chronological order, beginning with the end of the

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<sup>18</sup> Young, 1998: 250–259.

<sup>19</sup> Stephan, 1997: 2.

<sup>20</sup> Stephan, 1997: 3.

Ming period (1368–1644), when a large number of “Han Chinese” reached Manchuria from the south and began exerting population pressures on the native “Manchu.” The chapter then describes the “Manchu” as a race of not one but many tribes, like the native American Indians. Next, the “Manchu” dynasty established the Qing dynasty (1644–1912)—not in Manchuria, but to the south of the Great Wall. While the land of Manchuria had been left deserted by the “Manchu,” the Qing emperors tried to prevent the continuous migration of “Han Chinese” to Manchuria in order to preserve the authentic “Manchu” culture. However, because of the “population increase, the famine that impoverished peasants, and the rise of industry that destroyed agriculture” in China proper, there emerged a large number of poor “Han Chinese” who did not have any other recourse but to emigrate to Manchuria. In addition, the Qing dynasty needed “Han Chinese” soldiers to protect it as a result of the Russian expansion into Manchuria.

Another document I read was the agricultural census published in 1936. Reporting the “current state” of 63 farm households in a certain village in Manchuria, the census indicates that only seven are “Manchu” households, while the rest are populated by migrants from China proper. The ancestors of most of these 56 families, according to the census, migrated to Manchuria “five to six generations ago” and some came “12 generations ago.” The census equates “five or six generations” with a period of approximately 200 years.<sup>21</sup> Hence, in this village, the majority is “Han Chinese” who have lived in the same locality for generation after generation. However, these historically established “facts” are challenged by other documents that also aim to classify the population of Manchuria.

The “Declaration of the Establishment of Manchukuo” [*Manshūkoku kenkoku sengen*] is obviously one of the most official documents. This declaration contains the following two passages: “We hereby declare the establishment of Manchukuo and its separation from China by the will of 30 million people [*minshū*]”; and “there should be no differences among all those who live within this new territory. In addition to Han Chinese, Manchu, Mongol, Japanese, and Korean races [*zoku*], people of any other race [*shuzoku*] or nationality [*kokumin*] will be treated in the same way as others, as long as they wish to reside permanently in Manchukuo.”<sup>22</sup> This document is important primarily because “harmony among races” [*min-zoku kyōwa*] was one of Manchukuo’s official slogans. If so, the classifica-

<sup>21</sup> Kokumin Jitsugyōbu Rinji Sangyō Chōsakyoku, 1936: 6–15.

<sup>22</sup> Manshūkokushi Hensan Kankōkai, 1970: 209, 221.

tion presented in the declaration could not be false. However purposeful confusions or “metamorphoses” emerge on the part of categorizing agents due to the following contradictions inherent in the document:

Firstly, “harmony among races” was often phrased differently as “harmony among five races” [*gozoku kyōwa*]. Since “the people of any other race or nationality” should be small in number, the declaration’s five races are the “Han Chinese,” “Manchu,” “Mongol,” “Japanese,” and “Korean.” Yet, this classification is silent on their numerical ratios. In reality, the Japanese in Manchuria who were not on official duties were largely small-scale entrepreneurs and the women who catered to them and were extremely small in number. The number of Japanese agrarian settlers barely surpassed one thousand.<sup>23</sup> Hence, the classification of five “major” races in Manchuria is silent on the domination of a tiny “Japanese race” over a “Chinese race” which numbered about 30 million. Here, I must note that the Manchurian Youth League [*Manshū Seinen Renmei*] formed in 1928 was a major force behind the creation of the racial harmony slogan. League members, already living and working in Manchuria perceived Manchuria as a place where “Japan and China” (*nik-ka*) should co-exist peacefully and thus elevate the Chinese economy and culture. In addition, by saying that they were engaged in “guiding other racial groups” [*min-zoku shidō*], they emphasize that the Japanese superior race should lead this joint endeavor.<sup>24</sup> The political environment in which the league was formed—a rising Chinese nationalism opposing Japanese and the Western imperialism—is also important. In 1912, Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan) proclaimed China’s five races as being the *han*, *man* [Manchu], *meng* [Mongol], *zang* [Tibetan] and *hui* [Muslim]. While racism, assimilation, and the autonomy of each group complicated Sun’s idea, the notion of a united Han nationality incorporating the other four groups constituted an important element in the Chinese nationalist movement.<sup>25</sup> League members utilized Sun’s idea for securing their leadership in Manchuria despite the fact that the Japanese constituted only a fraction of Manchukuo’s population. Thus, the “Japanese” and the “Korean” replaced the *zang* and *hui* of Sun Yat-sen’s classification system.

Secondly, the “official” classification of five races presented in the declaration differs from another “official” classification of five races—namely, that of the Concordia Association, the sole political party allowed to exist

<sup>23</sup> Araragi, 1994: 277; see also Wilson, 1995.

<sup>24</sup> Hirano, 1972: 238–239.

<sup>25</sup> Duara, 1995: 142–144.

in Manchukuo. The latter adds “Russian” into the five races but integrates the “Han Chinese” and the “Manchu” into one category of “Manchurian” [*manjin*], which I will discuss shortly. Interestingly, Tachibana Shiraki, who first envisioned the Concordia Association, often relied on a different classification system of “Han Chinese,” “Manchu,” “Mongol,” “Korean,” “Japanese,” “Muslim,” and “Russian.” In the age of empires, the Japanese settlers in Manchuria and the Japanese in Japan proper seem to have called the largest Chinese-speaking population group *man-jin*, which I translate as “Manchurian” in order to distinguish them from the “Manchu.” Ian Buruma calls this practice a “Japanese deceit.”<sup>26</sup> After all, the “Manchurian” category that was forced upon the majority population of Manchukuo, did not exist. Nonetheless, in postwar Japan, the loss of Manchukuo has not resulted in the disappearance of racial categories and ideologies formed during the early twentieth century. When referring to the people of Manchuria, most Japanese still use *manjin* (while some conscientious people replace it with *chūgokujin*—Chinese). Japanese scholars of Manchuria are no exception. Aware of the colonial roots of these terms, they try to justify their continued usage with somewhat apologetic explanations, viz. that they should honor the Japanese layperson’s usage of the term.<sup>27</sup>

The origin of *man-jin*, however, seems to date to before 1932. In an article entitled “Manchuria: From the Qing Period to the Present” (1928), Ueda Kyōsuke compares the various dimensions of Manchuria of before and after the turn of the twentieth century, when Japan’s influence reached the area. Manchuria “before,” according to Ueda, was not known to the world; in fact, even the “Chinese” (who lived outside of Manchuria) had hardly heard the term or imagined it to be the land of *ginseng*, tobacco, herbs, and bandits.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Manchuria “after” is a “prosperous land of thirty million *Manchurians*, which had recently experienced an migration of some one million Chinese per year”<sup>29</sup> In this passage, “Manchurian” is not a synonym for “Manchu.” It is a new category that he had invented referring to the majority population of Manchuria, the “Han Chinese,” which most Japanese could not distinguish from the Sinitized “Manchu.”

<sup>26</sup> Buruma, 1994: 74.

<sup>27</sup> E.g., Araragi, 1994: 14.

<sup>28</sup> Ueda, 1928: 17.

<sup>29</sup> Ueda, 1928: 18, the emphasis is mine.

The following are eight additional racial classification systems used to describe the population in Manchuria over and above those that I have already presented. I detected them in official documents in the body text, table headings, or diagram labels:

1. "Manchukuoans" and "Japanese"
2. "Japanese (including Koreans)" and "natives"
3. "Japanese (excluding Koreans)" and "natives"
4. "Manchurians," "Japanese," "foreigners," and "those without nationalities" [*mukokuseki*]
5. "Manchurians," "Japanese," "Euro-Americans," and "those without nationalities"
6. "Han Chinese," "Manchus," "Mongols," "Koreans," "Japanese," "Muslims," and "Russians"
7. "Japanese," "Koreans," "foreigners," and "the rest including Han Chinese, Manchus, and Mongols"
8. "Nikkei (of Japanese descent)" and "Mankei (of Manchurian descent)"

Bearing in mind that these systems may require mathematical analysis in order to untangle the intertwining relationships among them, let me first comment on "Manchukuoan." I found the "Manchukuoan" classification most frequently in the population censuses of large cities. In the census of the city of Harbin, for example, "Manchukuoan" refers to "Han Chinese and Manchu," and is one among 32 categories, including "Japanese from Japan proper." Restated: while the census indicates that "Manchukuoan" is the largest group numerically, it excludes the "Japanese." Does this mean that "Manchukuoan" is the same as "Manchurian"? To answer this question, let me examine *Great Manchukuo*, the two-volume book authored by the anonymous employees of the East Asian Affairs Research Institute.<sup>30</sup> They argue that the independence of Manchukuo is the direct result of a "racial self-determination [*minzoku jiketsu*]" by 30 million "Manchurians"; that the International League of Nations condemned Japan's behavior because the League is ignorant of the fact that these "Manchurians," who have been awakened to their identities against the background of Chinese warlord brutality, are distinct from the "Chinese" (in China proper); that it

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<sup>30</sup> *Tōa Jikyoku Kenkyūjo*, 1933. Among the employees of the Research Institute for East Asian Affairs it was also possible to find Japan's colonial subjects, including Koreans and Chinese/Taiwanese. I emphasize, however, that the 'objective' eyes of all these authors are firmly anchored in Japan proper.

erroneously recognizes Manchuria as part of China, but it is certainly not; “indeed, even among the Japanese who are most knowledgeable about China, there are many who do not know that Han Chinese people and Manchurian-Mongol people [*man-mō-jin*] are entirely different races.”<sup>31</sup>

At this point, we can surmise that, for the authors of *Great Manchukuo*, the composition of “Manchurians” hardly mattered as long as they resided in Manchuria/Manchukuo. In other words, the Japanese, who invested heavily in Manchuria in order to transform it from the land of *ginseng* to a modern nation-state, had to create the “Manchurian” nationality in order to oppose the “Chinese” nationalism that was quickly spreading in China proper. Thus, both “Manchurian” and “Manchukuoan” reveal the status of the “Japanese” as the colonizer who excluded itself from both categories. In this respect, the “natives” (in classifications 2 and 3) can also be identified as “Manchurian” or “Manchukuoan.” I find this category most frequently in land ledgers, in which the “natives” refers to those whose land was confiscated by the Japanese authorities in order to be reallocated among the Japanese settlers.

The entirely artificial nature of “Manchurian” and “Manchukuoan” manifests itself in yet another book, the *Ten Year History of the Construction of Manchukuo*, authored by a group of Japanese bureaucrats around 1942. Looking back at the ten-year history of Manchukuo, the authors first argue that the declaration of the establishment of Manchukuo hardly explains the historical significance of its creation; rather, they argue, this significance gradually emerged in the past ten years. They then claim that Manchuria did not originally belong to any particular race; it was the land open to all, including the “Chinese,” “Korean,” “Japanese,” and “Mongol” peoples. Even the “Manchu” people, it argues, were not entitled to claim that they were the legitimate occupants of Manchuria because they once left the area and went south to govern China; in this respect, they are “return migrants” [*demodori*].<sup>32</sup> The “Japanese,” who excluded themselves from the “Manchurian” and the “Manchukuoan,” were thus only people who could decide *which racial group* could populate the land of Manchuria.

However, despite the Japanese authorities’ claim that Manchukuo was an independent nation state, the Manchukuo government never succeeded in creating the nationality law. “Those without nationalities” (in classifications 4 and 5), then, refers to the people who lost their “original”

<sup>31</sup> *Tōa Jikyoku Kenkyūjo*, 1933, II: 161.

<sup>32</sup> Takigawa and Etō, 1969: 3–7.

nationalities but were not able to obtain “Manchukuoan” citizenship. An example of this category is the so-called “White Russians,” who immigrated to Manchuria from either Russia or the Soviet Union. With the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1917, they lost their “Russian” nationality without being able to obtain the “Manchukuoan” citizenship. While some of them became naturalized “Chinese” before the establishment of Manchukuo, they had to register at the Bureau of Russian Émigrés (under Japanese authority) after 1932.<sup>33</sup> They therefore became “Russian émigrés.” Interestingly, those “Russians” who had entered Manchukuo with Soviet passports were often called “Red Russians.” The relationship between “Koreans” and “Japanese” is extremely ambiguous (in classifications 2 and 3). While “Japanese” occasionally includes “Koreans,” “Koreans” never includes “Japanese.” The inclusion or exclusion of “Koreans” is sometimes noted explicitly, but mostly implied. This particular relationship requires further analysis.

The authors of *Great Manchukuo* argue that the migration of Korean people to Manchuria gained momentum in the early 1910s, and attributed this not to Japan’s colonization of Korea, but to periodic warfare and famine on the Korean peninsula. They also argue that the “Korean” people in Manchuria were exploited by “Chinese” officials and landlords. It is the “Chinese,” not the “Manchurians” who are the culprits. By 1944, the Korean population of Manchuria reached almost two million.<sup>34</sup> These “Korean” people, the authors of *Great Manchukuo* argue, could not compete with the “Chinese” laborers who gladly worked for cheap wages or with the “Chinese” merchants who tended to be crafty. The only way for the “Korean” people to survive, they argue, is to rely on their rice paddy cultivation techniques, which they can now do safely because Japan provides them with land and protection. Finally, the authors argue, Japan should promote the “Korean” people’s migration to Manchuria, or they will migrate to Japan proper and threaten its labor market.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, once in Manchuria, the relation between the “Japanese” and the “Korean” shifted constantly. In this respect, historian Barbara Brooks makes a sharp observation when she argues that “Koreans,” “while in the ranks of the colonized in their own societies, fell into grayer, often impermanent, categories when displaced onto other realms of the Japanese empire.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Bakich, 2000.

<sup>34</sup> Brooks, 1998: 28.

<sup>35</sup> *Tōa Jikyoku Kenkyūjo*, 1933, I: 481–484.

<sup>36</sup> Brooks, 1998: 26.



*The Population in Manchuria* is one of a series of reports published in 1938 by the travel bureau of the Manchukuo government. The authors claim that “a pure race” does not exist anywhere in the world, and that the classification of races is solely based on the notion of “stem race,” an original race that had become significantly less pure as a result of intermarriage. They relate the “Han” or the so-called “Chinese” to the “Konlon” stem race but relate the “Manchu,” “Mongol,” “Japanese,” and “Korean” races to another stem race—the “Ural Altaic.” Both “Konlon” and “Ural Altaic” are linguistic groups. This philological approach to racial classification was the one first used by European scholars, but the Japanese historians of the late nineteenth century also relied on it in order to “establish a history for Japan” against China.<sup>37</sup> In *Japan's Orient*, Stefan Tanaka introduces us to the discourse of several such scholars who “manipulated” the categorization of the Ural Altaic linguistic group in order to elevate Japan's place in its formative years of nation building. This manipulation involved the separation of “Japanese” from “Chinese,” on whom the “Japanese” had relied for centuries as the source of civilization.<sup>38</sup> While these scholars did not always agree on the relationship between “Japanese” and “Koreans,” the authors of *Population in Manchuria* placed both in a single category of “Ural Altaic,” together with “Manchus” and “Mongols.” In other words, “Ural Altaic” includes both “Japanese” and Japan's colonial subjects.

The last classification (classification 8) seems to have been primarily used for categorizing the employees of public institutions in Manchukuo, such as government officials, military officers, teachers and students. The common suffix *kei*, which I translate as “of descent,” also means “of blood.” Hence, *nikkei* could also be translated as “of Japanese blood.” This is why *nikkei* includes those Japanese who immigrated to Manchuria from the United States and Hawaii. Stephen argues that for the *nikkeis* from the United States and Hawaii, “Manchuria held out the promise of a multi-ethnic land of opportunity as distinct from white-dominated ‘lands of opportunity’ such as Australia and North America.”<sup>39</sup> Leaving their relatives behind, many of whom were sent to relocation camps, about 2,000 Japanese from America became people “of Japanese blood” together with the “Japanese” from Japan proper.

In Manchukuo, the suffix *kei* was attached to any population group: *mankei* [of Manchurian descent], *senkei* [of Korean descent], *mōkokei* [of

<sup>37</sup> Tanaka, 1993: 17.

<sup>38</sup> Tanaka, 1993: ch. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Stephen, 1997: 3.

Mongolian descent], *taiwankei* [of Taiwanese descent], *roshiakei* [of Russian descent], ad infinitum. Since I have never come across *kankei* [of Han Chinese descent], *mankei* refers to “Manchurian,” including both “Han Chinese” and “Manchu.” *Mankei* is thus a handy word for connoting the stark difference of power between the largest population group and the “Japanese.” A *mankei* student had more grueling hours of Japanese language studies; a *nikkei* student studied Chinese for far fewer hours.<sup>40</sup> A *mankei* factory worker received only about 30 percent of a *nikkei* worker’s wage.<sup>41</sup> *Nikkei* employees of the Manchuria Cinematographic Association ate white rice while *mankei* employees sitting at the same table ate *kaoliang*.<sup>42</sup> Remember that the “Japanese” created the “Manchurian” to stress the latter group’s self-determination, on the grounds of which it could establish the independent nation of Manchukuo. Here, on the other hand, they used *mankei* to demonstrate that *nikkei* was a race apart from and superior to *mankei*. Where, then, did Japanese anthropologists place themselves in the business of classifying the population in Manchukuo? Were they free from the power of Japan’s imperialism?

### Who Classified Whom? Part 2

In pioneering works on the role of Japanese anthropologists in the making of Manchukuo, Nakao Katsumi chronicles the development of several institutions of ethnology in Japan and China in the early twentieth century.<sup>43</sup> One of them, the National Institute of Ethnology, originated in another organization called the Institute for the Study of National Policies [*Kokusaku Kenkyūjo*], established in 1933. Seven years later, three anthropologists—Egami Namio, Koyama Eizō and Matsumoto Nobuhiro—established a research group within this institute devoted to the study of

<sup>40</sup> Morisaki, 1971.

<sup>41</sup> Yamamuro, 1993: 281.

<sup>42</sup> Yamaguchi and Fujiwara, 1990: 119.

<sup>43</sup> In Japan, “anthropology” was called *minzokugaku* when it was first introduced, and translated as “ethnology,” probably due to the German influence on Japanese academia. In the article published in 1943 (see Ōmachi, 1982c), Ōmachi writes that there are two professional disciplines of the same name, *minzokugaku*, in Japan and yet they are written with different, but phonetically identical, Chinese characters. The first, 民俗学 [folklore studies] refers to the study of the Japanese homeland and is conducted in Japan. The second, 民族学 is the study of races other than the Japanese, and focuses on the material culture (and belief systems after the onset of the Greater East Asia War) of those non-Japanese populations. This latter *minzokugaku* has now been renamed to *jinruigaku* and translated as “anthropology,” although “ethnology” is still in use for the same term.

the various racial groups [*minzoku*] residing in China as well as Southeast Asia.<sup>44</sup> In the same year, another anthropologist, Oka Masao, returned to Japan after several years of study at the Ethnological Institute in Vienna. In Europe, he saw the rise of Nazism that, in his view, enabled anthropologists to earn great respect from the general audience, a respect that he wished to bring to Japan too. Once in Japan, Oka immediately began lobbying the government to establish a national institute of ethnology. The government seems to have swiftly responded to his request. With the financial support of the Japanese military industries, the Ministry of Education announced the plan to build the institute in 1941, and asked Oka to head the research group appointed to study the 108 racial groups allegedly residing in the Japanese Empire.<sup>45</sup> At this point, all the anthropologists who had worked for the Institute of the Study of National Policies joined Oka. A passage from the Institute's 1943 charter, reads as follows:

[We established the National Institute of Ethnology] since we felt an urgent need to create an institute of this nature for the purpose of carrying out the Greater East Asia War. We, the founding members of this Institute, will devote ourselves to the extensive study of racial groups with whom we would need to co-habit in Greater East Asia.<sup>46</sup>

Oka thus believed that Japan had finally reached the level at which Germany had been operating for quite some time.

While the construction of the National Institute of Ethnology was still underway (it eventually sent a considerable number of its members to Manchukuo between 1943 and 1945 as lecturers and researchers), a parallel movement was gathering momentum in Manchukuo. In 1942, the Manchuria Ethnological Association [*Manshū Minzoku Gakkai*] was formed in its capital, Shinkyō (Xinjing in Chinese, renamed to Chungchun after Japan's fall).<sup>47</sup> Despite Japan presenting Manchukuo as the land of five races, this association consisted primarily of Japanese: (Japanese) officers from the Manchukuo Government, (Japanese) judicial officers from the Manchukuo Department of Justice and (Japanese) university professors.<sup>48</sup> Anthropologists belonged to this last group. A passage from this group's charter reads:

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<sup>44</sup> Nakao, 1997: 50–51.

<sup>45</sup> Nakao, 1997: 49.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Nakao, 1997: 50.

<sup>47</sup> This association originated from another organization called the Manchukuo-Japan Cultural Association, established in 1932.

<sup>48</sup> Nakao, 1994: 138; see also Kawamura, 1990: 204–206.

What we are expected to do is not only acquire knowledge about human populations in the world and grasp the nature of their relationships. We are also expected to create a new world order, and for this very reason we must study human variations. Promoting anthropology in Manchukuo is particularly important because its population contains multiple races. We aspire to create harmony among them and it is for this reason that we hereby declare the establishment of the Manchuria Ethnological Association.<sup>49</sup>

This marked the start of a close collaboration between this association and the National Institute of Ethnology in Japan.<sup>50</sup> Aware of the slight differences of opinions among these anthropologists, I will now discuss the work of Ōmachi Tokuzō, who published widely on the racial classification of the people in Manchuria. In 1939, at the age of 38, Ōmachi left Japan (to escape Japan's notorious thought police, which had prosecuted his leftist activities in Tokyo) and traveled to Shinkyō, where he worked at the Manchuria Nation Building University [*Manshū Kenkoku Daigaku*] as a professor of German language and anthropology. Once there, he began studying the people residing in Manchukuo. I will now present the classification system that he presented in *Manshū no minzoku koshō* [The Nomenclatures of the Races in Manchuria], published in 1943.<sup>51</sup>

1. Japanese (*Nihon minzoku*)
2. Korean (*Chōsen minzoku*)
3. Han Chinese (*Kan minzoku*)
4. White Russian
5. Muslim (*Kaikyō-to*)
  - 5-a. Muslims who speak Chinese (*Kango kaikyō-to*)
  - 5-b. Turkish Tatar
6. Mongol
  - 6-a. Khalkha
  - 6-b. Buryat
    - 6-b-i. Chen (old) Burya
    - 6-b-ii. Xin (new) Buryat

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Nakao, 1994: 137.

<sup>50</sup> Nakao lists the titles of papers presented at the regular meetings of the Manchuria Ethnological Association. They include: "Family Systems Observed among Various Racial Groups Residing in Manchuria: Legal Perspectives" (Chigusa Tatsuo); "Customs Observed among Various Racial Groups" (Mori Zuiichi); "Relationships between the Races Residing in Manchuria: An Anthropological Perspective" (Yamamoto Noboru); "Personal Characteristics and Racial Characteristics" (Abe Saburō); "Racial Policies in Greater East Asia" (Egami Namio); "The Nature of Racial Characteristics" (Abe Saburō), and "What is Race?" (Imamura Yutaka) (Nakao, 1994: 139). Note that these Japanese anthropologists presented their research in Japanese to a mostly Japanese audience in Manchukuo.

<sup>51</sup> Ōmachi, 1982a.

- 6-c. Oirat
- 6-d. Daur
- 7. Machu-Ewenki
  - 7-a. Manchu
    - 7-a-i. old Manchu
    - 7-a-ii. new Manchu
  - 7-b. Ewenki
    - 7-b-i. Sibó (or Sibe) Manchu
    - 7-b-ii. Kyakala Manchu
    - 7-b-iii. Gorji
    - 7-b-iv. Orochen
    - 7-b-v. Solon
    - 7-b-vi. Tungus (further divided into “Russified Tungus” and “Mongolic Tungus”)

In this book, Ōmachi repeatedly claims that he has always honored the indigenous names used among local people for referring to each other. This is why the above classification system is far more complex than the crude systems that appear in Part 1. Yet his comments also make us ponder the capacity in which he created this system. For example he writes the following about the “Japanese”: “since this chart classifies the people of Manchuria, I should have begun with those who are indigenous to this land, but I will begin with the ‘Japanese.’ The meaning of this name is crystal clear for us.”<sup>52</sup> About “Koreans,” he writes: “while [the ‘Korean’ people] have become ‘Japanese,’ I will retain their racial name.”<sup>53</sup> These comments clearly place him not as much among anthropologists as among “Japanese” and “colonizers.” Moreover, he seems to have had little doubt about the homogeneity of each racial group, as if each was a group resided within a clear boundary. What interests me in this classification system is his understanding of “Manchu,” to which I will now turn.

In *The Nomenclatures of the Races in Manchuria*, Ōmachi wrote that he was particularly unhappy with the term *Tungus*, primarily because earlier European scholars used the term more inclusively than *Manchu*. In other words, according to Ōmachi, these scholars relied on the idea that “Manchu” was merely one group among the “Tungus.” Ōmachi is aware of the reason why *Tungus* became such a popular term among European scholars: although it was the name of a particular dialect spoken by Yakuts,

<sup>52</sup> Ōmachi, 1982a: 155.

<sup>53</sup> Ōmachi, 1982a: 156.

the Siberian Russians spread this name among these scholars. The latter then used it for referring to all northern tribes including the “Manchu.” Although there is no group of people who have called themselves *Tungus*, Ōmachi writes, the term has become quite popular thanks to “the error” made by the European scholars who mistook the name of a dialect for the name of a racial category. According to Ōmachi, some Japanese anthropologists had also followed this European practice. Suyama Taku, for example, includes not only “Manchu” and other northern tribes, but also “Japanese” and “Korean” in the single category of “Tungus.”

For this reason, Suyama even claims that *Orochen*, the name of one northern tribe of “Tungus” originates in the Japanese word [*yamata no*] *orochi*, a snake that appears in the Japanese origin myth.<sup>54</sup> For Ōmachi, this kind of word association is nothing but nonsense. However, he agrees with Akiba Takashi who argues that there are two major population groups in Manchuria, the “Han Chinese” and the “Manchu,” and that the latter should not be included in the “Tungus.”<sup>55</sup> Still, while Akiba includes the “Manchu” and other northern tribes in the same group, Ōmachi argues that the “Manchu” are an independent group. Considering the popularity of the term *Tungus* among European scholars, Ōmachi then proposes that the “Manchu” should be ‘spared’ from the inclusive category of “Tungus.” The best solution would be to create two categories of “Manchu” and “Ewenki” that embrace all the other northern tribes in Manchuria including the “Tungus.” However, if such scholars as Akiba insist that they should not be separated, let the group be referred to as “Manchu-Ewenki.”

Ōmachi seems to have wanted to accomplish the following with this classification. First and foremost, he tried to glorify the history of the “Manchu” and demonstrate that the “Manchu,” the original inhabitants of the land of Manchuria, were not the same as all the other racial groups residing in Manchuria.<sup>56</sup> Thus, commenting on this category, he writes: “the

<sup>54</sup> Ōmachi, 1982a: 164.

<sup>55</sup> Ōmachi, 1982a: 163; see also Akiba, 1938, Akiba and Akamatsu, 1941.

<sup>56</sup> One of the most important works that Ōmachi used to this end is *Social Organization of the Manchus* by S.M. Shirokogoroff, which Ōmachi translated into Japanese and published in 1944. Shirokogoroff, a Russian scholar, began his study of the “Manchu,” which he considered to be a sub-group of the “Tungus,” in 1917. He notes: “The distinction between the ‘Manchu’ and the ‘Han Chinese’ is currently very subtle. The linguistic and ethnological study of the ‘Manchu,’ therefore, could only be carried out by an older generation of Sinologists” (quoted in Ōmachi, 1982d: 272). However, Shirokogoroff himself still managed to gather the data that he believed suggested the difference between the “Manchu” and other “Tungusic” groups. I am grateful for Professor Lee Dongjin who alerted me to the sources Ōmachi used to differentiate the “Manchus” from the “Han Chinese.”

'Manchu,' which had integrated many neighboring races, represent the race that had built the Qing Empire and governed China. 'Manchu' is the name they use to refer to themselves. The name of *our* Manchukuo solely originates from 'Manchu.'<sup>57</sup> For Ōmachi, then, the "Manchu" was the only group of people indigenous to the land of Manchuria while all the other races immigrated to it from somewhere else. This marked the start of his search for "the purest Manchu people."<sup>58</sup> Yet, the more he searched for the pure "Manchu," the more frustrated he became from the practice of his compatriots, i.e., calling all the Chinese speaking people in Manchukuo *man-jin* without differentiating "Manchu" and "Han Chinese." According to Ōmachi, one of the reasons for this "shameful" practice was that the Japanese, who had lived on islands, had so far lacked contacts with alien races [*i-minzoku*]. For this reason, the Japanese have very little knowledge of the races of Greater East Asia other than themselves.<sup>59</sup>

In this respect, a brief discussion of the history of the Manchukuo National Central Museum [*Manshūkoku Kokuritsu Chūō Hakubutsukan*] is extremely insightful. In 1939, the Manchukuo Government announced a plan to build the first national museum in its capital. However, two years into the Japan-China War, the original plan seems to have undergone many changes. Consequently, when it was finally built, the Manchukuo National Central Museum was nothing but a relatively small natural history museum, largely engaged in displaying the flora and fauna of Manchuria. However, the museum's director, Fujiyama Kazuo, was eager to add a museum of ethnology to this natural history museum. His vision was to show the visitor the life styles of the "indigenous peoples of Manchuria, including the Manchu, Sibo, Gorji, Orochen, Daur, Buryat and Turkish, as well as those of the immigrants to Manchuria, such as the Japanese, Koreans, Hans and White Russians."<sup>60</sup> While the war forced Fujiyama to postpone his plans (the museum was never built), what caught my attention are the words of the Japanese staff members of this museum:

[The Manchukuo National Central Museum was located] in the dusty area where mostly *man-jin* lived. Since many of them are prone to stealing [artifacts, we had to place them all in glass-covered cases]. Due to the location of this museum, we made special efforts to maintain cleanliness inside the building. In addition, we prohibited the visitors from smoking. In other

<sup>57</sup> Ōmachi, 1982a: 159, the emphasis is mine.

<sup>58</sup> While Ōmachi refers to "Manchu" as "Mandu," I replaced it with the more conventional spelling.

<sup>59</sup> Ōmachi, 1982b.

<sup>60</sup> Ōtsuka, 1993: 46.



words, we thought it was quite important for us to convey to the visitors the importance of cleanliness.<sup>61</sup>

Museum staff seem to have taken it for granted that *man-jin* were dirty, poor, and uneducated without proper manners. They therefore wanted to show off the clean museum building to impress *man-jin*. Despite their efforts, however, those who daily visited this museum were only a small number of Japanese. While museum staff members were apparently unable to distinguish pure “Manchu” from “Han Chinese,” did Ōmachi eventually find the purest “Manchu”? His ethnographies do not provide a definitive answer.

### Conclusion

Suggesting that anthropological knowledge facilitated the expansion of colonial power may be too bold, but “if the role of anthropology for colonialism was relatively unimportant, the reverse proposition does not hold.” Indeed, the expansion of Japanese imperial power was central to “the anthropological task of recording and analyzing the subject populations’ way of life, even when a serious consideration of that power was theoretically excluded.”<sup>62</sup> When we nonetheless consider the question of *what* shaped the Japanese racial classifications in Manchukuo, we must also take yet another colonial structure Japan was forced to adopt as part of its relationship to the Western imperial powers into account. Hence, it might be insightful to begin this conclusion with a quote from *Manchuria: Cradle of Conflict*, published by an American journalist, Owen Lattimore, who traveled through Manchuria from 1929 to 1930. In this book, Lattimore described the “Japanese” as “the chief protagonist of the Western culture,” that is, the only people in Asia who had more or less successfully adopted Western ideas and technology, and wrote that Japan’s “interpretation and application of a borrowed culture is of acute interest to the Western world.”<sup>63</sup> Indeed, the “application of a borrowed culture” in Japan dates back to the nineteenth century, when a large number of scientists from Europe and the United States traveled to and resided in Japan.

These scientists, such as Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796–1866), his son Heinrich von Siebold (1852–1908), Edward S. Morse (1838–1925), Erwin

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Ōtsuka, 1993: 43.

<sup>62</sup> Asad, 1990: 315.

<sup>63</sup> Lattimore, 1935: ix.

von Baelz (1849–1913), and Bruno Taut (1880–1938) were hardly interested in the classification of the future subjects of Japan's overseas empire but very interested in the origin of the "Japanese" race. Interestingly, these Western scientists were more or less of the same opinion: the origin of the "Japanese" race can be located in the race that conquered the people indigenous to the Japanese archipelago, and this conquering race was most probably a mix of various Asiatic races.<sup>64</sup> The way in which they influenced the first generation of modern Japanese scientists, however, is more complicated. While most Japanese scientists accepted the thesis presented by their Western teachers, others opposed it, arguing that the "Japanese" race had resided in the Japanese archipelago since time immemorial and that the "Japanese" were always the pure race.<sup>65</sup> The tension between these two groups of Japanese scientists, which persisted until the fall of Japan's empire (and still persists in the present) is not simply the battle between the "liberals" and the "nationalists." Rather, I argue that both groups tried to promote Japanese nationalism in different ways during the early twentieth century, i.e., by either accepting or rejecting Western modernity. Such scientists as Kanesaki Ken, however, took a middle position.

In an article titled "Random Thoughts on Racial Problems" published in Manchukuo in 1942, Kanesaki Ken advocated interracial marriages between "Chinese," "Manchu," and "Mongol" people. He argued that such mixed marriages would produce "citizens of Manchukuo" who would be superior to either "Chinese," "Manchu," or "Mongol." However, Kanesaki also argued that the children of such interracial marriages would always be inferior to the "Japanese," precisely because the latter embody a higher degree of racial mixing. In other words, Kanesaki understood the "Japanese" as the product of many centuries of intermarriages. He thus had no doubt concerning the superiority of the "Japanese" people, who "possess the spirit of racial harmony in their own blood." Whether mixed" or "pure," then, the "Japanese" were always on the apex of a racial hierarchy.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See Oguma, 1995: Ch. 1.

<sup>65</sup> According to Oguma Eiji, those who accepted the Western scientists' theses on the origin of the Japanese race included Tsuboi Shogorō (1863–1913), Torii Ryūzō (1870–1953), Koganei Yoshikiyo (1859–1944) and Yokoyama Yoshikiyo (1826–1879). These were also the first members of the Department of Ethnology at Tokyo Imperial University. Those who opposed it and insisted on the idea of the Japanese as a pure race included Naitō Chisō (1827–1903), Kurokawa Mayori (1829–1906), and Katō Hiroyuki (1836–1916), who apparently was a later convert to the 'pure race' thesis (see Oguma, 1995: Ch. 1).

<sup>66</sup> Kanesaki, 1942.

In my Introduction, I argued that the “metamorphoses” seen in Japanese classification systems applied to Manchukuo’s population did not represent the “primitiveness” of the “Japanese” but their colonial power. However, let me put this thesis aside for the time being and list several examples of such metamorphoses already discussed in this chapter. One is the metamorphosis of “Han Chinese” and “Manchu” into “Manchurian.” The Japanese invented this category to separate Manchuria from China proper. Since Manchuria was a separate entity, those who occupied the land had to be an independent population group. And yet, prior to this manipulation, the Japanese emptied the land to entitle themselves to occupy it as a “colonizer,” and repopulate it with “Manchurians.” Furthermore, while the Japanese honored “Manchurians” for their “self-determination” as grounds for the independence of Manchukuo, they also discriminated between “Manchurian” (and *mankei*) as a race apart from the “Japanese.” Another is the metamorphosis of “Han Chinese” and “Manchu” into “Manchukuoan.” This category implies the notion of a modern citizenship in the allegedly independent nation-state of Manchukuo. Nonetheless, a particular group, the “Japanese,” were still considered to be Japanese citizens in Manchukuo. A third is the “Japanese” category, in which the Japanese could include or exclude “Koreans” at will. Last is the “Ural Altaic,” category into which the Japanese included themselves and their colonial subjects—the “Manchu,” “Mongol,” and “Korean”—in order to separate it from the “Konlon,” i.e., the “Han Chinese.” Interestingly, Japanese anthropologists seem not to have noticed these cases of metamorphoses, though some, such as Ōmachi, admonished their compatriots for their ignorance of the independent category of “Manchu.” Yet, even they did so to elevate the status of “Manchu” over “Chinese” while their antagonism toward the latter remained. All these examples, then, indicate that the classification systems created by the Japanese are not so much classifications of the people of Manchuria as classifications of themselves in their relations to the colonized. “Metamorphoses,” then, are the signs that indicate that the Japanese failed to create a solid boundary around themselves. They are also the signs that indicate their power.

In this respect, we must also understand that while power produced “metamorphoses,” “metamorphoses” in themselves produced more power. This is clearly indicated in the following quote from *Travel to China* by Honda Katsuichi, who interviewed Mr. Xiao, a “Chinese” who lived in Manchukuo, at some point during the 1960s:

While passing by a Japanese police officer, [Mr. Xiao] was asked, ‘Which country are you from?’ Japanese police officers and those Chinese who

worked for them [as spies] often asked this question to find anti-Japanese activists among the Chinese. If he answered, 'I am Manchurian [*man-jin*],' the Japanese police office would say, 'All right.' But if he answered, 'I am Chinese,' the officer would regard him as an anti-Japanese dangerous element and would even jail him as a potential criminal. Since imprisonment meant execution, none would have identified themselves as Chinese [according to Mr. Xiao].<sup>67</sup>

Does this mean that the Japanese became, as what Lattimore has referred to as, "the chief protagonist of the Western culture," and, if so, had the Western colonial officers and anthropologists also metamorphosed the racial categories? While this question would require another full chapter to answer, allow me to briefly quote two examples. One is the Western invention of the "African" category, which refers to all the native populations of the African continent. Although this name has spawned the post-independence "Pan-Africanist" movement, it also hid the variety of ethnic identities existing within it.<sup>68</sup> In this respect, the practice parallels the Japanese practice of referring to the entire Chinese-speaking population of Manchukuo as "Manchurian", both being imperial in nature. Another is the British colonists' vision of the land of the Bushmen as being "depopulated," a practice that is akin to the Japanese practice of emptying the land of Manchuria before repopulating it with "Manchurians," a race apart from the "Chinese."<sup>69</sup> These practices do not represent the survival of the "primitive" tradition in the West; they represent nothing but the Western colonists' power. What distinguishes the West from Japan, however, is that the Western colonists never included themselves in the category of the "colonized" while the Japanese often did so in Manchukuo. We can attribute this particular Japanese practice to "the historical and geographic circumstances of the overseas Japanese empire [that] set it apart from its European counterparts and gave it a character and purpose scarcely duplicated elsewhere," i.e., Japan's colonization of the Asian region whose populations were "racially akin to their Japanese rulers."<sup>70</sup> In other words, unlike the European colonists who created a rigid divide between the "colonizer" and the "colonized," the Japanese could create more fluid relations among racial categories to gain formidable colonial power.

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<sup>67</sup> Honda, 1971: 115.

<sup>68</sup> Wallerstein, 1991: 127–129.

<sup>69</sup> Pratt, 1986.

<sup>70</sup> Peattie, 1984: 6–7.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### RACE AND INTERNATIONAL LAW IN JAPAN'S NEW ORDER IN EAST ASIA, 1938–1945

Urs Matthias Zachmann

Racism is a venom that poisons the very sources of law. With its assumption of allegedly immutable and inherent differences in nature, race undermines human agency and the power to legislate and enforce positive law. Thus, race destroys the very fabric of law's "mystical foundation."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the ideological function of race, i.e., the inclusion and exclusion of people in the allocation of resources and services,<sup>2</sup> fractures the unity of the legal system and subverts it into a fragile structure that eventually succumbs to the arbitrariness of its divisions. If this is true for domestic law, which has a natural unity and a strong backing of power *per se*, it is even more so for the hybrid cluster of norms we call international law, with its notorious lack of power and the consequently heightened need for consensus and cooperation among its subjects. Historically, international lawyers have felt this potentially corrosive effect of race quite acutely and have often tried to steer clear of it, albeit with mixed success.

A good case in point is Nazi Germany: In April 1939, at a conference in Kiel, Carl Schmitt gave a lecture on the "international legal principles of the greater space" [*Völkerrechtliche Großraumprinzipien*]. This was to be the starting point of Schmitt's subsequent development of the *Großraum* [space] concept in a number of essays published during the war.<sup>3</sup> In its most elaborate version, Schmitt's essay on the "international legal greater space order prohibiting interventions by alien powers" (1941) developed the vision of an "empire" [*Reich*] at the core of each sphere of influence that lorded over a scaled hierarchy of nations and protected these against the intrusions of other powers alien to the sphere.<sup>4</sup> This was part of Schmitt's

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<sup>1</sup> For the "mystical foundation," see Jacques Derrida, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> For this function of racism, see Miles, 1989: 3, 77–84.

<sup>3</sup> Blasius, 2001: 184–202. For a survey of international law scholarship in Nazi Germany, see Stolleis, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> "*Völkerrechtliche Großraumordnung mit Interventionsverbot für raumfremde Mächte. Ein Beitrag zum Reichsbegriff im Völkerrecht*" (fourth ed.), reprinted in Schmitt, 1995: 269–371.

“war of international legal studies” [*völkerrechtswissenschaftlicher Kampf*] against the universalist and state centered nineteenth century “classical” international law that had served Britain’s imperialist interests so well.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, it was an explicit apology for Hitler’s eastward expansion course in Europe, all the more obvious since the “German-Soviet Treaty of Borders and Amity” of September 1939 seemed to him the virtual embodiment of his greater space theories.<sup>6</sup> As is well known, the treaty aimed to partition Poland.

Schmitt was nonetheless bitterly attacked for his *Großraum* concept and especially by his personal nemesis, the rabid Nazi jurist Werner Best (1903–1989).<sup>7</sup> Best’s main point of criticism was that Schmitt still clung to the notion of law and wanted to guarantee the independence of the nations within the sphere. Thus, Schmitt upheld the concept of an “international legal greater space” [*völkerrechtliche Großraum*], whereas Best propagated a “racial greater space” [*völkische Großraum*]. To protect against the corrosive effects of a racial hierarchy, Schmitt insisted on a *Großraum* which did not annihilate the “independent life and existence of the various nations, but succeeds in retaining the existence of peoples organized in states on an earth divided into greater spaces.”<sup>8</sup> Best, on the other hand, rallied against such an “artificial preservation” of nations in an existing greater space order. “This would be an aim,” he wrote, “inimical to life and therefore impossible. Life will not be hindered in its rise and fall by deliberately created ‘orders.’”<sup>9</sup> It is perfectly clear that this “fall of life” pointed at the German genocides which were well underway at the time. Thus, Carl Schmitt was eventually sidetracked by the historical developments in Europe.<sup>10</sup> However, his theories of a racially indifferent greater space remained most influential in a completely different political setting—namely, in international legal studies in wartime Japan.

The role of race in Japanese history is a highly elusive issue.<sup>11</sup> Wildly differing theories exist concerning the kind of racial or ethnic self-image that may have existed in imperial and postwar Japan, and concerning which projections of the same type were cast on Japan’s neighbors Korea

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<sup>5</sup> “*Raum und Großraum im Völkerrecht*” [Space and *Großraum* in international law, 1940] in Schmitt, 1995: 259.

<sup>6</sup> Blasius, 2001: 198.

<sup>7</sup> Blasius, 2001: 192–195. Also see Herbert, 1996: 275–279.

<sup>8</sup> Schmitt, 1995: 261.

<sup>9</sup> Best, 1940: 1007.

<sup>10</sup> Blasius, 2001: 199–202.

<sup>11</sup> Also see Morris-Suzuki, 1998: 355–356.

and China. On the one hand, it is argued that the notion of a homogeneous Japanese ethnicity had existed since the Meiji period, one which consciously constructed an Inside and an external "Other" that not only served to legitimize Japan's special position in East Asia, its "leaving Asia" [*datsua*], or *leading Asia* in later times, but which was also used to apply pressure on minorities *in Japan* and make them more amenable to social integration. This self-image was consciously forged by Meiji leaders in order to create a cohesive nation-state modeled on Western standards. Thus, Michael Weiner, for example, writes:

[T]he criteria for membership in this uniquely powerful national collectivity [sc. the Japanese nation] were construed as both "racial" and cultural. A corollary of this construction of a Japanese "race" would be the simultaneous categorization of other populations as members of equally distinct but subordinate "races." [...] Given that Japan was consciously modeling its behavior in other spheres of activity on that of its European and North American contemporaries it is hardly surprising that Japanese "racial" discourse was inspired by and developed in response to that of the most advanced Western nations.<sup>12</sup>

However, the latter observation is just the point in question: Given the fact that Japan was across the color-line and as such was discriminated against by the Western powers, is it really natural to expect that Japan would adopt the same strategies for identity formation as the Western powers? Would it not be more intuitive to assume that, at least in its *foreign* relations, Japan would try to overcome this natural limitation imposed on it by racism? At least insofar as the high-times of Japan's modernization, the Meiji period (1868–1912), are concerned, the indicators seem to point towards the latter.<sup>13</sup>

In recent times, the idea of Japan's self-imagining as a "homogeneous nation" has come under unrelenting attack as constituting an "invented tradition." This follows the general trend in Japanese intellectual discourse and in fact, global discourse, of replacing long-accustomed paradigms of essentiality and homogeneity with notions of the plurality and hybridity of the Japanese people. Thus, the renowned international lawyer Ōnuma Yasuaki, for example, criticized in the early 1990s the discriminatory immigration regime applied to Korean residents in Japan which came into existence in 1952 and which was based on the "myth" of a homogeneous

<sup>12</sup> Weiner, 1997a: 8–9. Almost identical is Weiner, 1997b: 104–5.

<sup>13</sup> Zachmann, 2011a.



nation.<sup>14</sup> In a better known example, the historian Oguma Eiji argues in his 1995 book *Tan'itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen* [The Origins of the Myth of a Homogeneous Nation]<sup>15</sup> that the dominance of the doctrine of the homogeneous nation was, in fact, a postwar development. Before the war, Oguma claims, a “mixed nation theory” was predominant, one which had the following belief at its core:

From time immemorial, Japan successfully assimilated a large number of alien peoples and immigrants. The blood of immigrants even flows in the veins of the Imperial Family. Therefore, the Japanese nation excels at ruling and at assimilating alien peoples, and this experience should be used to carry out Japanese policies of expansion and assimilation.<sup>16</sup>

However, this too poses a problem if we consider, for example, such highly emblematic texts as the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 or the so-called “Fundamentals of our National Polity” [*Kokutai no hongi*] of 1937.<sup>17</sup> These articulated an official ideology and clearly placed the divinity of the Imperial Household as ancestors of the Japanese people and the unbroken line of the emperors since generations immemorial at the core of the “national essence.” Although this ethno-centrism may not fall under racism in its strictest definition, it certainly serves the function of establishing a hierarchy among peoples and “criteria by which to include or exclude groups of people in the process of allocating resources and services.”<sup>18</sup>

How, then, are we then to reconcile these seemingly contradictory statements about the role of race (and ethnocentricity) in Japan in modern times? The problem, it appears, is one of time, but also one of sources, or, more to the point, of perspectives. Obviously, the Japanese conception of its own identity and—*mutatis mutandis*—of its “others” is not fixed and is in constant flux due to political and social exigencies. Moreover, as in most judgments of historical facts, the truth lies in the eyes and sources of the beholder. Thus, one could argue that the “homogeneous nation argument”—of which both the Rescript on Education and the “Fundamentals of our National Polity” are characteristic—is largely concerned with domestic politics where, indeed, Japanese leaders since

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<sup>14</sup> Ōnuma, 1993.

<sup>15</sup> Oguma, 1995. English translation in Oguma, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Oguma, 2002: 321.

<sup>17</sup> For a translation of the Rescript, see de Bary et al., 2006: 108–11. For translated excerpts from the *Kokutai no hongi*, see de Bary et al., 2006: 277–284.

<sup>18</sup> Miles, 1989: 3.

the late Meiji period have tried to establish an orthodoxy about the body politic and create a "good citizen" [*ryōmin*] obedient to the throne. On the other hand, the "mixed nation-argument" is largely focused on Japan's *foreign relations*, and especially its interactions with East Asian countries, where the assimilation of colonial citizens and the co-optation of "friendly nations" needed an ideological foundation. Naturally, there is no sharp distinction between domestic and foreign politics, especially Japan's case, where issues tended to transgress the distinction between foreign and domestic politics (after all, the close link between both realms is one of the founding myths of the Meiji state). This transgression and blending of spheres makes it sometimes almost impossible to disentangle the various strands of race, culture and ethnicity that are woven together to form the complex pattern of Japanese self-identity.

Nowhere is the complexity of the linkage between race, culture, and ethnicity more apparent than in the case of Japan's most fateful projects, the "New Order in East Asia" and the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" during the extended war of 1937–45 (the second Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific War). The present chapter seeks to clarify the relation between race, culture and ethnicity in these constructions from one particularly important point of view, namely that of the Japanese international lawyers who were commissioned to devise the legal framework for the New Order in East Asia. Heavily influenced by Carl Schmitt's greater space theory, these legal scholars suffered from similar criticisms leveled against them by Japanese ultra-nationalists. Although the Japanese international lawyers were capable of situating their arguments in favor of law and against the limitations of race within a well-established orthodoxy of Japanese foreign politics since Meiji times, the development of the war soon created a tension which, had the war continued for much longer, might have led to a "racialization" of law and, ultimately, to its self-annihilation.

### *The Traditional Role of Race in Japan's Foreign Relations*

If we follow Gerrit Gong and the English School, Japan's integration into international society in the mid-nineteenth century was mediated by a "standard of civilization."<sup>19</sup> Although the criteria of civilization were not

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<sup>19</sup> Gong, 1984.

clearly defined from the outset and only became more and more so in the process of Europe's negotiations with non-Western powers (especially Japan and the Ottoman empire), it was taken for granted by all parties that "civilization" as such was a unified standard and—despite its European origins—had become "modular" (to use Benedict Anderson's term by way of analogy)<sup>20</sup> and, therefore, should apply universally. This was also the underlying assumption of the treaty revision process completed in 1899 when the New Treaties between Japan and the Western powers came into effect.

The shock for Japanese leaders and the gravity of the situation, therefore, could not be underestimated when it became clear that the rise of Japan as a great power also roused the hydra of racism, embodied in the "yellow peril" scare that circulated among the western powers after the first Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95.<sup>21</sup> Henceforth, the Japanese government consciously tried to dispel those fears in several ways: firstly, by increasingly insisting on "civilization" or other universal standards as the measure of their actions. The advertisement of their state-of-the-art warfare during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 and the proposal for inserting a racial equality clause in the League of Nations Covenant in 1919 are two of the best known examples of this strategy.<sup>22</sup> However, it has been noted that, apart from the highfalutin rhetoric which surrounded this strategy, both incidents were primarily motivated by the wish to overcome obstacles which would limit Japan's status as a great power or its expansion, whether imperialistically or through peaceful migration. Moreover, both arguably failed to achieve their aims, a fact which greatly aggravated the Japanese public and eventually pushed it towards a more "racialized" view of foreign politics.<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, the insistence on a universal standard that included Japan for a long time prevented any solidarity or Pan-Asianist notions from coming to the forefront of Japanese foreign policy rhetoric. Although these notions were harbored by a minority, Japanese diplomats avidly tried to dispel any Western concerns of unfavorable alliances, especially with China.<sup>24</sup> The exception here is Korea, which was, in any case, a formal part of Japan since 1910. In this case an official doctrine stated that the Japanese and

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<sup>20</sup> Anderson, 1991: 4; Zachmann, 2009: 18.

<sup>21</sup> Zachmann, 2009: 44–46; Zachmann, 2011a.

<sup>22</sup> Valliant, 1974; Shimazu, 1998.

<sup>23</sup> For the reactions to the western powers' rejection of a racial equality clause in 1919, see Tamai Kiyoshi kenkyūkai, 2004.

<sup>24</sup> Zachmann, 2009: 66–75.

Koreans share a common ancestor [*Nissen dōsoron*] in order to facilitate the annexation and rule of Korea by means of “soft power.”<sup>25</sup> However, this theory was innocuous in relation to the Western powers, given that Japan’s annexation of Korea posed no security threat to them (excluding a defeated Russia).

Thirdly, the aforementioned reasons also prevented the myth of a superior, homogeneous Japanese people from becoming predominant in self-imaging discourse until the 1930s. Although the standard assumption was that Japan was the “pioneer of the East,” its corollary was the belief that China and Korea could achieve the same progress under Japanese guidance.<sup>26</sup> The *kokutai*-orthodoxy which developed in the late nineteenth century was, as we have pointed out above, primarily intended for domestic consumption.

### *Japan’s “New Order” and the Co-Prosperity Sphere*

A lot of the above changed in the 1930s with the Manchurian Crisis (1931–33) and the low-level conflict that finally widened into the Sino-Japanese War (1937–45). If World War I had already discredited old notions of a “civilization,” the Manchurian Crisis and subsequent events in Europe did the same disservice for Wilsonian “New Diplomacy.”<sup>27</sup> Japanese politicians, diplomats and military men had not been too eager to leave the age of classical imperialist foreign politics behind and join the game of multilateral, “open diplomacy” in any case. In fact, of Japan’s relatively integrative foreign policy during the 1920s was largely predicated on the tacit understanding by even the most liberal politician that Japan had “special rights” and interests in Northeast Asia that needed “protection.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, as far as the government and its consultant international lawyers were concerned, the political and legal foundation for a Northeast Asian “sphere of influence” and for military intervention in that sphere had been laid all along.<sup>29</sup> Japan’s withdrawal from the “international society” in 1933 was nonetheless a watershed, as it exposed the hidden fractures

<sup>25</sup> Oguma, 2002: 64–80.

<sup>26</sup> Zachmann, 2009: 25, 46.

<sup>27</sup> For a skeptical account of both, see Grewe, 1988: 520–535, 686–690.

<sup>28</sup> See Nish, 1977: 156 for Shidehara Kijūrō’s position concerning Manchuria.

<sup>29</sup> Zachmann, 2010.

within this society and hastened its disintegration into political fragments and blocs.

The Japanese leadership sought to rationalize Japan's new expansionist drive through the declaration of evolving concepts. In 1938, Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro (1891–1945) declared a “New Order in East Asia” [*Tōa shinchitsujo*], which should unite Japan, China and Manchukuo “by the common aim of realizing the relationship of neighborly amity, common defense against communism, and economic cooperation.”<sup>30</sup> In 1940, Konoe's Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yōsuke (1880–1946) inaugurated the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” [*Dai-Tōa kyōei-ken*], which would thereafter comprise East Asia and Southeast Asia, reflecting the progress of Japan's troops on the continent.<sup>31</sup>

The most conspicuous change of policy we can observe in these declarations is the apparent renunciation of a universal standard and the use of the Pan-Asianist rhetoric of “same culture, same race” [*dōbun dōshu*] in the (violent) pursuit of forging an autonomous Japanese “sphere of influence” in Asia and winning over potential collaborating nations with the promise of “liberation” from the yoke of western oppression.<sup>32</sup> However, the “same race”—and, to some extent, the “same culture”—element posed a problem the further south Japanese expansion progressed. Even the declaration of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere toned down these elements and placed them among other affinities, such as geographical, historical, and economic commonalities.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the necessity of cooptation required that Japan should at least formally commit itself to a policy that *respected* diversity in order to accommodate as many nations as possible within the reach of its Co-Prosperity Sphere. As Matsuoka Yōsuke put it: “[I]t is necessary for Japan to create as many friendly nations as possible in the present international situation by actively making advances towards many powers.”<sup>34</sup> This policy found its most manipulative expression in the Joint Declaration of the Greater East Asia Conference of November 1943, according to which “[t]he countries of Greater East Asia, by respecting each other's traditions and developing the creative faculties of each race, will enhance the culture and civilization of Greater East Asia.”<sup>35</sup> Although the realities of the Japanese wartime

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<sup>30</sup> Lebra, 1975: 68–70.

<sup>31</sup> Lebra, 1975: 71–72.

<sup>32</sup> Hotta, 2007; Aydin, 2007: 162–189; Gates, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Duus, 1996: xxii.

<sup>34</sup> Lebra, 1975: 72.

<sup>35</sup> Lebra, 1975: 93.

empire often were bleak, multi-ethnicity was indeed part of the project, as demonstrated by Yukiko Koshiro in this volume. This is not to say that there were not parts of the Japanese bureaucracy (especially the Ministry of Health and Welfare) that pursued other (e.g., eugenic) visions of Japanese "purity."<sup>36</sup> These, however, stood in contradiction to mainstream government policy.

In stark contradiction to its professed respect for diversity, Japan launched the so-called *kōminka seisaku*, i.e., a rigid assimilation policy to turn Japan's colonial subjects in Taiwan and Korea into loyal "subjects of the emperor" [*kōmin*] within the boundaries of its formal empire.<sup>37</sup> The culmination of this policy can be seen in the integration of Korean and Taiwanese soldiers into the Japanese war machine.<sup>38</sup> Apart from patching up shortages in manpower, this integration had a consciously anti-racist propaganda function which even intensified as the war progressed.<sup>39</sup> The Korean Government-General generally rejected racial theories, especially those of Germany's National Socialists.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the official policy towards Koreans and Taiwanese rejected race and promoted cultural (or ethnic) assimilation. However, anti-racism did not prevent the large-scale abuse of Koreans through forced labor or sexual slavery, a pattern which was repeated in other incidents.<sup>41</sup>

The contradiction between the professed idealism of the "New Order" and East-Asian realities has led many observers to judge the former as a mere cover-up and the latter as the "true face" and intention of the Co-Prosperity Sphere. The intellectual Takeuchi Yoshimi, for example, famously denounced the intellectual foundations of the Co-Prosperity Sphere as a mere "pseudo thought" [*giji shisō*] which had come into existence for the sole purpose of "suppressing all other thought."<sup>42</sup> While this may be true, it still poses problems on several levels: Firstly, if the goal was suppression, the rejection of any coordinative elements in the Co-Prosperity Sphere and the adoption of outright German-style racism might have been much more "effective." However, the Japanese government consciously chose "co-operativism" [*kyōdōshugi*] as the leading paradigm of its public diplomacy. Consequently, the Japanese ultra-nationalists who sensed that this

<sup>36</sup> Dower, 1986: 262–290; Morris-Suzuki, 1998: 366–367; Oguma, 2002: 203–236.

<sup>37</sup> For a comparative overview, see Chou, 1996.

<sup>38</sup> Fujitani, 2002.

<sup>39</sup> Fujitani, 2002: 265.

<sup>40</sup> Oguma, 2002: 209.

<sup>41</sup> See Fujitani, 2002: 234.

<sup>42</sup> Takeuchi, 1963: 14.

limited Japan's absolute authority and loathed this moderating effect of the Co-Prosperity Sphere, denounced the Sphere as an un-national [*hiko-kuminteki*] "miniature version" of the odious internationalism of the 1920s that stood in contradiction to the absolute prerogative of the "national polity" of Japan (*kokutai*).<sup>43</sup>

Even more so, however, it is notoriously difficult to pinpoint the exact meaning of the intentions of the Co-Prosperity Sphere, as different people and different groups have pursued different goals with it.<sup>44</sup> In any case, the Co-Prosperity remained a mere shadow of the distant future, as the Japanese government had no "master plan" and kept its proclamations very vague.<sup>45</sup> Think tanks charged with the task of devising a new order for Japan or for East Asia were short-lived, heterogeneous in composition and likewise ambivalent in their recommendations. The most characteristic of these was the Shōwa Kenkyūkai [Shōwa Study Group], which was officially founded in 1936 under future Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro and dissolved in 1940. It consisted of a wide variety of intellectuals, ranging from Marxists and liberals to Japanese ultra-nationalists. The policy recommendations this heterogeneous group came up with, such as the "Principles of Thought for a New Japan" [*Shin Nihon no shisō genri*, 1939] were ideologically equally promiscuous.<sup>46</sup> In a sense, "co-operativism" [*kyōdōshugi*] was not only the central inner principle of these recommendations, but also the magic word which "glued" all these ideologies together.

However, all the members of the Study Group appeared to agree on one thing, and this was the rejection of German-style "nationalism" [*minzokushugi*]<sup>47</sup>—in the context of the late 1930s this included the racial theories of National Socialism (the "*völkische*" nationalism)—as too parochial and not applicable to the Japanese situation. Thus, they argued:

With respect to nationalism [*minzokushugi*] in Germany, it should be kept in mind that nationalism was necessary for Germany's reconstruction after the Great European War. Moreover, it functions as a political slogan for the reconstruction of a Greater Germany towards the large number of Germans abroad. However, Japan, which does not share the same historical situation as Germany, cannot tackle this problem in the same way.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Sakai, 2000: 125.

<sup>44</sup> For the diverse intellectual sources of the Co-Prosperity Sphere, see Miwa, 1990.

<sup>45</sup> Duus, 1996: xxvi.

<sup>46</sup> Harrington, 2009.

<sup>47</sup> *Shin Nihon no shisō genri* [Principles of Thought for a New Japan, 1939] in Miki, 1966–86, XVII: 517.



Finally, it should be understood that, as in many cases in the history of Japanese foreign policy, the "New Order" had a double function that was directed as much to matters abroad as to domestic matters: Thus, the "co-operativism" of the New Order not only aimed to contain and co-opt anti-Japanese forces in China and South East Asia; it was also directed towards the *inner* antagonist, especially ultranationalist forces and the military. Konoe explained the rationale for his declaration as follows: "The rights of the state [*kokumuken*] and the rights of the military [*tōsuiken*] were entirely separate, as if they were distinct phenomena . . . I eventually cleared my cabinet of its reputation for fence-sitting by taking responsibility for the magnification of the China Incident. I tried to restrain the military by an appeal to public opinion."<sup>48</sup> Yet, if this was the aim Konoe miserably failed to attain it. The military, as much as other groups within Japanese society, refused to buy into Konoe and Matsuoka's Yōsuke's declaration. Its critics argued that the concept of the Co-Prosperity Sphere was too nebulous and needed clarification, and this argument turned up almost as a *ceterum censeo* in every discussion of Japan's wartime situation.<sup>49</sup> For Konoe's domestic antagonists, this was, of course, a polite way of rejecting co-optation.

*Race in the "Greater East Asia International Law" Project*

Japanese international lawyers actively supported the government's project of a "New Order in East Asia," but also believed that they had to defend themselves and the object of their profession—international law—against ultranationalist criticism and public indifference alike. In this respect, race played an important function as the indicator of "rational" or ultranationalist positions.

To understand the situation in which Japanese international lawyers found themselves during the war, it is worth noting that since the occupation of Manchuria in late 1931 international law had gradually but inexorably lost its authority among the Japanese public and had even become the target of ridicule and invective.<sup>50</sup> The contrast between the status of international law before 1931 and its status in wartime Japan is quite

<sup>48</sup> Yabe, 1952, II: 74, as cited in Nish, 1977: 303.

<sup>49</sup> Arima, 2006: 252–256.

<sup>50</sup> For international law discourses during the "Manchurian Incident," see Matsui, 1979.

striking. Even minor incidents, such as the so-called Asama Maru Incident of 1940, in which a British man-of-war stopped a Japanese liner in Japanese waters to conduct a search and arrest 21 German passengers suspected of espionage, clearly demonstrate this.<sup>51</sup> The incident created a huge outcry among the Japanese public which was completely out of proportion to its political relevance. However, unlike before and in contrast to the reactions of the British public, the Japanese public was less concerned with arguments of international law—which were still prominent during the Manchurian Incident—and declared these as virtually irrelevant to the “national shame” the Japanese nation had suffered. After Japan’s withdrawal from the League, the public had apparently lost all faith in the mediating function of international law, as disputes on its grounds were likened to a “dialogue between fish and birds,” i.e., totally pointless.<sup>52</sup>

A similar spirit, but one which was much heightened by ultranationalist fervor, can be observed in an often-quoted discussion between public intellectuals in December 1943 on the occasion of the second anniversary of Pearl Harbor.<sup>53</sup> The grotesque nationalism and chauvinism of the discussion which revolved around the spiritual situation of Japan and the necessity for a new “Japanese science” is memorable: After a general denouncement of “barbarian knowledge” [*seikaigaku*, i.e., Western sciences], the participants turn to the value of international law for Japan. One member lamented Japan’s excessive obedience to this foreign standard:

Satō Yoshio: [...] Japan, however, knows no exceptions and sticks to the rule. It observes justice and equity in international relations. Doing so, it forgets its own subjectivity [*shutaisei*, i.e., identity]. Japan doesn’t need international lawyers. It is said that archeology is a ladies’ science. In that sense, international law is a ladies’ science. (Laughs.) To please women, one talks about international peace and justice. But with men, one acts like a savage [*kichiku*]. International law is superfluous. In addition, with respect to preserving the subjectivity of Japan...

Komaki Saneshige: Such a thing as international law actually should not exist after the beginning of the Greater East Asian War. That is, amidst the splendor of His Majesty which embodies the Way of the Empire and spreads in the world, international law is impossible.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> For this incident and the reactions of the Japanese and British public to it, see Tamai Kiyoshi Kenkyūkai, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Tamai Kiyoshi Kenkyūkai, 2007: 54.

<sup>53</sup> Komaki et al., 1943.

<sup>54</sup> Komaki et al., 1943: 99.

This passage does not merely illustrate the derisory way in which ultranationalists talked about international law. It also shows the ethno-centric viewpoint which, dwelt often enough in the notions of Self-“pureness” that imperceptibly transgressed the borders into racism.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, although Japanese international lawyers were far from opposed to the war's aims and actively contributed to it in their own way, it is noteworthy to remark that they had to face considerable domestic opposition and indifference in the pursuit of their mission. On December 8, 1941 (Japanese time), one day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the president of the Japanese Society of International Law [Kokusaihō Gakkai] filed an application for the incorporation of his society as a foundation [*zaidan hōjin*].<sup>56</sup> The direct motivation was a shortage of money, since the Carnegie Peace Foundation, which had subsidized the Society until 1940 had withdrawn its funding. However, the new foundation's charter declared that the real reason was much more profound: With the development of the New Order in East Asia, the society's mission had even gained in importance and it would now use this occasion to broaden the scope of its actions: it would not only continue studying the theory and practice of international law and politics and promote international justice, but would also set itself the task of establishing “a theory of the special international law which applied to the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” [*Tōa kyōeiken ni soku suru tokushu kokusaihō no riron*].<sup>57</sup> To this end, it would set up committees of experts devoted to this task.

The new Foundation accordingly set up four committees, one of which was the “Committee for East Asian International Law” [*Kokusaihō iinkai*]. This group met regularly and its members reported in turn on the subjects and tasks assigned to them. The group comprised all the influential international lawyers in Japan from the Universities of Tokyo and Kyoto. For of the purposes of understanding the role of race in the legal construction of the Co-Prosperity Sphere, three among them are especially important: Tachi Sakutarō (1874–1943), who was the official advisor to the Foreign Ministry until his death in 1943; Yasui Kaoru (1907–1980), a young but overly ambitious international lawyer from Tokyo Imperial University and Tabata Shigejirō (1911–2001) from Kyōto University, who was much

<sup>55</sup> For the discourse concerning the “purity” of the Yamato race / ethnicity, see Dower, 1986: 203–233.

<sup>56</sup> Takenaka, 1995: 71–73.

<sup>57</sup> “Setsuritsu shuisho” (Charter), in “Kokusaihō gakkai,” *Kokuritsu kōbunshokan*, Ref. No. 3D-25, 1585.

more detached from politics, but was nonetheless arguably the most productive and creative mind in the construction of an East Asian International Law.<sup>58</sup> It should also be noted, however, that although Tachi was the official advisor to the Foreign Ministry, almost all the international lawyers in public service had held an advisory position at one point. In fact, the “Committee for East Asian International Law” reported directly to the Foreign Ministry, so it must once again be considered, to be a kind of think tank for this institution.

It is worth mentioning that from the outset, it is difficult to surmise what the legal “blueprint” for the Co-Prosperity Sphere, if completed, would have looked like. There was (luckily) no time for this: During the two years between the project’s beginning in 1942 and its end in 1944, when Japanese international lawyers were already prepared for a new postwar order, they merely had time to conduct some preliminary studies of the problem.<sup>59</sup> However, in all likelihood it would have been an autonomous “regional international law,”<sup>60</sup> whose existence was acknowledged in Article 21 of the Covenant of the League of Nations (“regional understandings like the Monroe doctrine”). In fact, the committee’s publications, especially its newly founded series “Library of Greater East Asia International Law” [*Dai-Tōa kokusai sōsho*], consciously called the soon to be developed international law a “grand space international law” [*kōiki kokusaihō*].<sup>61</sup> This was most likely taken from Carl Schmitt’s *Großraum* concept, as Schmitt in general became very influential among Japanese international lawyers during the war (and remained so after the war). However, although the German legal model was traditionally the most influential in Japan, the German *Reich* and its foreign policy were less so. If any established sphere of influence functioned as a model for Japanese international lawyers, it was the American Monroe Doctrine and Soviet concepts of international law.

Moreover, although the ambition was to create an autonomous regional international law for “Greater East Asia,” this does not mean that such a law would completely differ from traditional international law or even wholly *negate* its principles and doctrines. Even lawyers of the younger generation, such as Tabata Shigejirō, made it quite clear that, if anything,

<sup>58</sup> For a general overview of their works, see Ōnuma, 1986. For Yasui’s and Tabata’s wartime activities, also see Matsui, 2004; Sakai, 2007: 42–57.

<sup>59</sup> For the transition to the postwar order, see Takenaka, 1995; Zachmann, 2008.

<sup>60</sup> For “regional international law,” see Schindler, 2004.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, the address of Yamada Saburō, the president of the Kokusaihō gakkai, when the new series was launched in Yasui, 1942.

the process of establishing such a regional law would be one of gradual development, not iconoclastic revolution. Having read his Marx well, Tabata understood that in a dialectical process, a pure negation of the existing order would not yield any progress at all.<sup>62</sup> He made this abundantly clear in a methodological essay on the difficulties of establishing a new, autonomous order:

For historical phenomena, such a categorical negation, i.e., the conception of a new order independent from the past, as if creating something from nothing, is impossible. Such creation must take place by rejecting the past, and this rejection must be motivated by a thorough analysis of the past's international order. In order to speak of the development of a new international law of East Asia, it is necessary to demonstrate the cogent reasons for why one has to destroy the principles which have governed international relations for so long and demand a new order. [...] As long as the international law of the Co-Prosperity Sphere remains a merely abstract idea without an analysis of the old order, the question of whether to comply with the new international law is no longer a theoretical problem but merely a matter of irrational faith which leaves no room for an active discussion.<sup>63</sup>

Tabata's observation succinctly demonstrates two general characteristics which applied to Japanese international law at the time: Firstly, his critique of an outright rejection of tradition and an irrational leap of faith into an arbitrary new order is clearly directed against those ultranationalist critics who advocated just that or—as we have seen—revolted against the very idea of international law in such a new “order.” Secondly, Tabata's seemingly rational praise for scientific progress should underline the fact that Japanese international lawyers took their duty of building a new international legal order rather seriously and worked all the more effectively towards this end.

Due to the wartime restraints on overt criticism, the discussion between the international lawyers and the ultra-nationalists (or, rather, the one-handed defense of international lawyers from the latter's attacks) often followed rather oblique strategies—most notably the discussion of Nazi international law and the role which “*völkischer*” nationalism or race played in it. Japanese international lawyers followed the developments in Germany very closely and regularly introduced new books on the subject to the interested public. One of the most active proponents of this was Yasui Kaoru, a young professor of international law at Tokyo University.

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<sup>62</sup> On Tabata's Marxist influences, see his autobiography (Tabata, 1988: 8–11).

<sup>63</sup> Tabata, 1943: 11–12.

He was the head of the “Committee for East Asian International Law” and also the chief editor of the Committee’s new series “Library of Greater East Asia International Law.” As the first volume of the series, he published his own study “Fundamental concepts of a European Greater Space law” [*Ōshū kōiki kokusaihō no kiso rinen*, 1942]. This study contained the most comprehensive introduction of the German *Großraum* discussion—especially Schmitt’s ideas—to the Japanese public up to that point, but also—and this is often overlooked—of Soviet international law. In the early postwar years, Yasui was ousted from Tokyo University for having introduced Schmitt’s thesis to the public.<sup>64</sup> This is somewhat ironic, as he had finally decided to become a Marxist-Leninist at the very end of the war.<sup>65</sup> Until then, he had indecisively wavered between National-Socialist and Soviet concepts of international law, as both suffered from certain “limitations” [*seiyaku*]. In the case of National Socialism, this referred to the “*völkische*” [racial] limitations of international law, which was its essence, but at the same time severely hampered its applicability outside a particular historical situation:

I have first pointed out that liberal international legal thought is linked with cosmopolitanism [*sekaishugi*]. Marxist international legal thought at the present stage is firmly attached to the position of the Soviet Union, but its ultimate goal is a global revolution. Both are anti-statist and anti-nationalist [*hanminzokushugiteki*]. In opposition to this stands German National Socialist international legal thought, which takes an essentially racist position.<sup>66</sup> Here lies the meaning of this facet of international legal thought, but also its limitations [*genkai*].<sup>67</sup>

This is closely linked with the demands of the German Volk [*Doitsu minzoku*] in our times. It is unthinkable to separate the meaning of Nazi international legal thought from this context. Consequently, there is not much of this thought which we can import into a different context.<sup>68</sup>

The doyen of Japanese international law, Tachi Sakutarō also followed the new developments of a race-oriented Nazi international law with considerable misgivings.<sup>69</sup> Although Tachi—like many Japanese—sympathized with Germany’s rebellion against the “dictate of Versailles” and its political

<sup>64</sup> For Yasui’s postwar life, see Orr, 2000.

<sup>65</sup> Yasui, 1955: 31.

<sup>66</sup> Japanese writers consistently translated the German term *Volk* as *minzoku*. Since *Volk* had a more racist (“the Germanic race”) than ethnic or nationalist meaning in Nazi Germany, I translate *minzoku* as “race” or just *Volk*.

<sup>67</sup> Yasui, 1942: 7.

<sup>68</sup> Yasui, 1941: 1519–1520.

<sup>69</sup> Tachi, 1937. For Tachi’s position in international law, see Ichimata, 1973: 114–123.

ambition to regain "equality," he clearly criticized the notion that law was nothing more than the expression of the legal awareness [*Rechtsbewusstsein*] of a nation (or race) as a natural community defined by "blood and earth."<sup>70</sup> This concept made a necessary common legal awareness impossible for the international community, which was made up of different peoples. International law, then, became but an imperfect "system" crafted by a minority (and therefore not binding).<sup>71</sup> Moreover, Tachi objected to the notion of racial inequality, which was the core of the National Socialist view of international law, as intrinsically incompatible with the principle of state equality (and therefore, as a legal principle, self-destructive).<sup>72</sup> In any case, World War I had already taught that an international structure resting on the concepts of nation or race was certainly not conducive to international peace and security.<sup>73</sup>

The most telling critique of Nazi international law was once again suggested by Tabata Shigejiro. An international lawyer of the same generation as Yasui Kaoru, Tabata was much less conspicuous in his war activities than Yasui (and consequently weathered the transition into the postwar period much better). However, dogmatically speaking, Tabata was much more inventive and productive in his contribution to the structure of a "Greater East Asia international law."<sup>74</sup> To begin with, in a widely discussed study on the "pluralistic structure of the international order" [*kokusai chitsujō no tagenteki kōsei*]<sup>75</sup> Tabata argued that traditional international law was not a "universal" constitution, but merely a general law [*lex generalis*] which could therefore be abrogated by more special norms that could collectively constitute something of a "regional international law."

Although this may point to the same direction as Nazi international law, which likewise rejected the unity of the international legal order, Tabata was adamant that this particular order was permeable and acknowledged legal subjects within the sphere, especially the existence of nation states. Here, Tabata explicitly invoked Carl Schmitt's *Großraum* theory: "Carl Schmitt, too, argues that the *Großraum* is not something closed [*heisateki*], but acknowledges the possibility of [legal] relations between the spheres, between the empires which lead the spheres, and between the peoples which belong to the *Großraum* and which are organized as

<sup>70</sup> Tachi, 1937: 20–21.

<sup>71</sup> Tachi, 1937: 21.

<sup>72</sup> Tachi, 1937: 30.

<sup>73</sup> Tachi, 1937: 24.

<sup>74</sup> Sakai, 2007: 51–57.

<sup>75</sup> Tabata, 1942–43.



states.”<sup>76</sup> It is no coincidence that Tabata explicitly referred to the passage in Carl Schmitt’s essay “Space and greater space in international law” in which Schmitt defended himself against Werner Best’s attacks and counter-vision of a “racial international order.”<sup>77</sup>

By agreeing with Schmitt’s, Tabata positioned himself against the ultra-nationalists in Japan. This becomes even more apparent in an explicit critique of the “turns of Nazi international legal science.”<sup>78</sup> Here, Tabata developed a model of the progress of Nazi international law in three phases: firstly, the critique of the Versailles system through the principle of equality; secondly, the critique of existing international law through the postulate of the “racial or ethnic limitations” [*jinshuteki, minzokuteki na seiyaku*] of law; and finally the third phase, the so-called international law of greater spaces.<sup>79</sup> Tabata especially criticized the “racial or ethnic limitations” of the second phase:

One could raise considerable doubts against this racist or ethnic theory of law. In particular, why should some kind of racial proximity based on biological or natural factors lead to a common normative consciousness [*kihanteki hōishiki no itchi*]? Or is it not necessary to assume an objective moment which transcends the differences of normative consciousness among the particular peoples in order to explain the validity of international legal norms?<sup>80</sup>

This was basically Tachi Sakutarō’s argument against a racialized concept of international law rephrased in different words. However, Tabata’s model of phases is very interesting in that it presents Schmitt’s (and therefore his own) *Großraum* theory as a more highly developed stage which transcended the limitations of race. Considering Schmitt’s dispute with Werner Best and the fact that Germany’s foreign policy clearly belied this judgment, it is obvious that Tabata was aiming less at an accurate account of developments in Germany than at developing an argumentative defense against the increasingly aggressive onslaughts of ethnocentric, ultra-nationalist critics of international law in Japan. In the following year and for the remainder of the war (until 1944), Tabata developed a model of “relative equality” according to performance, which on the one hand rationalized Japan’s hegemonic position in the Co-Prosperity Sphere, but

<sup>76</sup> Tabata, 1942–43: 400–401.

<sup>77</sup> Reprinted in Schmidt, 1995: 234–262.

<sup>78</sup> Tabata, 1943.

<sup>79</sup> Tabata, 1943: 5.

<sup>80</sup> Tabata, 1943: 11.

on the other hand guaranteed a modicum of sovereignty to the sphere's other "member states."<sup>81</sup>

### *Epilogue and Conclusion*

The skeptical reader of this chapter might argue that the racial indifference which international lawyers professed during wartime stood in stark contrast to the realities of the war. Indeed, horrendous atrocities were committed by the fighting parties, driven by a burning hate for each other that, if not exactly complying with the stereotype of "race hate" on the Japanese side, led to the largely the same results in its consequences.<sup>82</sup> The treatment of POWs, for example, is a case in point, as a considerable racial bias was displayed towards the enemy and the prisoners' chances of survival greatly depended on the color their skin.<sup>83</sup>

Japanese international lawyers knew very well that they were situated in a proverbial "ivory tower" which they nonetheless chose to defend even in the face of such contradictions.<sup>84</sup> International lawyers such as Tachi Sakutarō routinely claimed that, even if for whatever reason Japan waged an undeclared war against China, this was a "factual war" [*jijitsujō no sensō*] in which the laws of war applied at least analogously (except, perhaps, the rules of neutrality). Insofar as the treatment of POWs is concerned, this certainly coincided with the official policy that, although Japan had not signed the 1929 "Convention Concerning the Treatment of Prisoners of War" it would apply its provisions to American POWs accordingly [*jun'yō suru*].<sup>85</sup> This analogy, however, was somehow lost in the trenches. Other scholars, such as Taoka Ryōichi (1898–1985) or Yokota Kisaburō (1896–1993) more or less openly criticized the military for its transgressions of humanitarian law. Taoka, for example, declared Japan's aerial bombings of Chinese "open cities" unlawful, while Yokota criticized Japan's raid on Pearl Harbor. Yet, there are nonetheless signs that the tension between legal ideal and unlawful reality gradually became unbearable and that some international lawyers would have eventually been swept away by the torrents of "total war."

<sup>81</sup> Sakai, 2007: 51–57.

<sup>82</sup> For "race hate" on either side, see Dower, 1986. For a qualification of Dower's thesis concerning the Japanese side, see Shillony, 1988: 202–203.

<sup>83</sup> Kowner, 2009.

<sup>84</sup> For more details, see Zachmann, 2011b, Ch. 5.

<sup>85</sup> Fujita, 2001: 158.

However, the end of the war prevented such a deluge and Japanese international lawyers, like the legal profession in general, underwent the transition into postwar times relatively unscathed (except for Yasui Kaoru, who was purged from Tokyo University). The Japanese “empire” was stripped from all its overseas territories and reverted to its Meiji period beginnings. In addition, Japan was under American occupation, and even after 1952 its sovereignty in security matters and towards Okinawa remained limited. Japanese international lawyers rapidly adapted to the changing circumstances while maintaining a continuity of goals.<sup>86</sup> While they had sought to set up an autonomous “regional law” during the war, they now sought to regain and defend Japan’s autonomy vis-à-vis the United States. Thus, it is no coincidence that Tabata Shigejirō, for example, switched paradigms from “relative equality” to the classical concept of “absolute equality” as a defense against great power interventions (specifically American intervention) and lobbied—as a member of the Heiwa mondai danwakai [Peace Problems Forum]—for Japan’s absolute neutrality. Considering Japan’s reduced territorial status and the generally repressed awareness of the presence of foreigners (Koreans) in Japan,<sup>87</sup> it is hardly surprising that the issue of “race” had ceased to play a role in the postwar discourses of Japanese international lawyers. However, it is exactly this absence of any engagement with this issue and the self-restriction of international lawyers to the goal of Japan’s absolute neutrality, i.e., a “purity” in foreign relations, as it were, that constitutes the perfect analogy to the postwar obsession with Japan as the isolated, homogeneous, and “pure blooded” nation that has been observed by Yukiko Koshiro in this volume and by other scholars, and which is now gradually waning.<sup>88</sup>

To conclude, let us revert to our initial question: What role did race play in the legal structure of Japan’s “New Order” during the war? To this, let us add the question: What does this say about the function of race in Japan’s international relations, and in foreign politics in general? The answer to the initial question is quite straightforward: Japanese international lawyers strenuously tried to keep the legal structure of the “New Order” as racially indifferent as possible. On the one hand, this was a measure of self-preservation on two levels: Race, if allowed to enter the legal

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<sup>86</sup> Sakai, 2007: 58–66; Takenaka, 1995. For more details, also see Zachmann 2008 and 2011b (Ch. 6).

<sup>87</sup> For this repression in contrast to the American case (concerning Japanese-Americans), see Fujitani, 2002.

<sup>88</sup> Oguma, 2002; Morris-Suzuki, 1998: 373–375.

system of the Greater Co-Prosperity Sphere would have eventually proven to be self-destructive for international law itself. On the other hand, "race" was a stigma of ultranationalist discourse which tended to reject international legal relations within the Sphere in any case. Thus, fighting racist positions by criticizing Nazi international law meant fighting the "inner enemy." Not that the position of international lawyers was endangered in that sense; it was fully within the mainstream of Japanese official foreign policy at the time. As such, Japanese international lawyers lent their expertise to the Japanese government in support of the legitimacy of its continental policy not only towards Japan's "friendly nations" in Asia, but possibly, through the adoption of a non-racist framework for the "New Order," towards the Western enemy.

This finally leads us to the more intractable question of what this says about the function of race in Japan's international relations, and in foreign politics in general. Since the early 1990s and with the "third opening up" of Japan to the torrents of globalization, replacing the long-accustomed paradigms of essentialism and homogeneity with the keywords of the plurality and hybridity of the Japanese people has become a dominant trend. Consequently, a number of studies have appeared presenting historical evidence for the plurality and hybridity of the Japanese empire and revising our conceptions of prewar Japanese history in general.<sup>89</sup> This chapter may serve to further substantiate these claims and thus might appear to endorse this trend. And yet, debunking the myth of Japan as a "racist" empire merely leads to the much more troubling question of our time: Far from exonerating those who promoted Japanese expansionism for not resorting to racism, this merely proves that culturalism, or the evocation of universal standards and the progress of civilization can, given a suitable situation, legitimize largely the same actions. "Civilization" was a murderous concept even in the nineteenth century<sup>90</sup> and has become no less murderous after being overshadowed by the racist excesses of the twentieth. Our twenty first century contemporaries would do well to keep this in mind when judging the politics of the past and the present alike.

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<sup>89</sup> For this trend towards revision, see Shillony, 1988.

<sup>90</sup> For a graphic illustration of this, see Zachmann, 2009: 172, fn. 115.



## CHAPTER TWENTY

### EAST ASIA'S "MELTING-POT": REEVALUATING RACE RELATIONS IN JAPAN'S COLONIAL EMPIRE

Yukiko Koshiro

Since the nineteenth century, Western racial ideology, maintaining the inherent superiority of Europeans and their civilization over the rest of the world, has been used to justify the subjugation of other peoples in the name of humanitarian motives. As they launched their imperial project at the turn of the twentieth century, Japanese leaders similarly began to form a scientific pretext for their superiority. Scholars of biology, physiology, eugenics, cultural anthropology, sociology, history, theology and linguistics argued for the unique racial origin of the Japanese and the superiority of their nation. They legitimized their leadership over other Asians with the claim that they were the first Asians to progress to a higher level of civilization alongside Westerners. In this regard modern Japan's racial constructions seem to have evolved in the image of Western racism.

Observed carefully, the Japanese colonial empire operated within its own racial constructions. The Japanese had reason to be wary of the Western theory of innate racial differences. As long as Western racism justified the inferiority of non-whites based on skin color, the Japanese had to defy Western racism to prove their own aptitude for imperial projects. Japanese leaders of the modernization process never considered themselves inferior to Westerners, but optimistically believed that they could easily duplicate their entrepreneurship. The Meiji government taught school children that any racial differences between them and highly civilized Westerners were not innate and could be overcome by their constant effort to learn.<sup>1</sup> Compared to their Western counterparts, Japanese views of their colonial subjects were more ambiguous and protean. After all, most of Japan's colonial subjects were "fellow" Asians with the same skin color and cultural backgrounds. The Japanese believed that other Asians could reach their level of civilization by way of a "benevolent" Japanization program. Between 1937 and 1938, Japanese psychologist Tanaka Kan'ichi administered an I.Q.

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<sup>1</sup> Koshiro, 1999: 9–10.

test to children of various immigrant groups in North America. While he “proved” that the Japanese were the brightest, he also claimed that Chinese and Korean children scored higher than British, Nordic, German, and other European children.<sup>2</sup> The Japanization [*kōminka*] of colonial people in Asia was practicable due to the view that “fellow” Asians were not intellectually inferior to the whites.

The Japanese as colonial masters also understood that they were not a “pure” race but rather an amalgam of races of Asia and the Pacific. Since the late nineteenth century, leading Japanese scholars such as Taguchi Ukichi (historian and economist), Torii Ryūzō (ethnologist and anthropologist), Inoue Tetsujirō (philosopher), and Tsuboi Shōgorō (physical anthropologist) had maintained that various racial and ethnic groups from the Asia-Pacific region (the Malay Archipelago, the South Sea, Mongolia, China, Korea and so on) migrated to the Japanese archipelago tens of thousands of years ago, went through generations of hybridizations, and eventually formed one nation and one people.<sup>3</sup> The conception of the Japanese as an amalgamated people facilitated a vision in which the Japanese empire would ultimately become a great melting pot of the Eurasia-Pacific region, and in which colonial subjects could—and should—become Japanese.<sup>4</sup>

When the Japanese realized that they would be denied equal status with whites regardless of their modernization (westernization), their nation increasingly distanced itself from the League of Nations. The Japanese people recognized that notions of the “superiority” of Japan’s modernization were bound to a Western paradigm of racial hierarchy: to deny the validity of white supremacy would be to deny their own leadership. Japan’s colonial empire never intended to exclude the white race. It adhered to the wisdom of coexistence or interdependence with the Western world.

In the 1920s and 1930s, as Japan’s colonial empire became multi-ethnic and multiracial, integrating the Chamorro and Carolinian peoples in Micronesia as well as the Russians in Manchuria, race relations within Japan’s colonial empire deviated further from the Western norm. Discrimination continued to mark the master-subject relationship. But paradoxically enough, the barrier between the colonial master and subjects became more porous in the realms of marriage, living space, labor, and cultural activity, sometimes upsetting the conventional power relations

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<sup>2</sup> Koshiro, 1999: 169, n. 31, 267.

<sup>3</sup> Oguma, 1995: 34–48, 73–79; Sakano, 2005: 99–103, 109–115.

<sup>4</sup> Oguma, 1995: 235; Duus, 1998: 415.



between the two. Although the Japanese empire never adopted the principle of egalitarianism, no Western-style racism cemented the wall between the rulers and the ruled. The Japanese empire had a somewhat more fluid hierarchy than its Western counterparts. From the perspectives of colonial subjects, "Japanization" was brutally coercive and in no way altruistic. Yet Japan experimented with empire-building using a logic of fusion and integration distinct from that of the West.

### *Colonial Intermarriage*

Western colonialism had been a predominantly masculine enterprise. In British India, Dutch Indonesia, and French Indochina, Western men's sexual contact with native women was once tolerated as a "perk of the imperial system."<sup>5</sup> In the nineteenth century, visualizing an insurmountable racial and social distance between the rulers and the ruled, Western powers increasingly discouraged sexual liaisons between white masters and colored mistresses.<sup>6</sup> After World War I, Western societies condemned colonial miscegenation as a sign of racial degeneration, which harmed the prestige of the white man and sowed socio-political unrest in their empires.<sup>7</sup> Sentiments against miscegenation also led Western administrators to introduce residential segregation to urban planning in the colonies. In French Indochina, for example, colonists built the first freestanding villas for whites in Phnom Penh between 1900 and 1904, and cordoned them off from the Cambodian quarter with a moat.<sup>8</sup>

In Japan, interracial marriage was never officially banned. Intermarriage between Japanese women and Spanish and Portuguese traders in western Japan had occurred since the mid-sixteenth century. Even during the Seclusion, Dutch traders had open relations with licensed Japanese concubines and fathered mixed-blooded children. After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, interracial marriage encountered legal obstacles primarily because a couple's civil status was arbitrarily defined by either the Western or Japanese government.<sup>9</sup> Between 1873 and 1895, about 230 interracial couples received approval from the Meiji government for their marriage.

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<sup>5</sup> Judd, 1996: 170.

<sup>6</sup> Strobel, 1991: 3.

<sup>7</sup> Strobel, 1991: 4; Pattynama, 1998: 99–100.

<sup>8</sup> Edwards, 1998: 115.

<sup>9</sup> Takeshita, 2000: 25–26. Kamoto, 2001: 77–108.

Of 230 cases, 180 involved Japanese women and 50 involved Japanese men. Spousal nationalities were 77 British (65 men and 12 women), 57 Chinese (57 men and no women), 32 German (14 men and 18 women), 25 Americans (13 men and 12 women), 15 French (10 men and 5 women) and 24 of miscellaneous nationalities.<sup>10</sup> In 1899 the Meiji government successfully abolished part of the unequal treaty system with the Western powers and subsequently enacted the nationality law to sanction Japanese marriage with foreigners, regardless of the latter's nationality, race, ethnicity, or religion.

Japanese individuals did not seem to consider interracial marriage with their colonial subjects damaging to their prestige. Tōyama Mitsuru, founder of the Gen'yōsha, a right-wing nationalist secret society, and Utsunomiya Tarō, Army attaché in London and later commander of the Chōsen Army, both supported Japanese intermarriage with other Asians based on the view that such unions would speed up the fusion of the rulers and ruled and accelerate the full Japanization of colonial subjects.<sup>11</sup>

"Fusion of blood" first took place at the royal level. The intermarriage between the Japanese and Korean royal families may not have been a radical policy. According to the *Shoku Nihongi*, the imperially commissioned record of Japanese history completed in 797, Emperor Kammu, the fiftieth emperor, who ruled Japan from 781 to 806, was born to Emperor Kōnin and his concubine Takano no Niigasa, a descendant of King Muryeong of Baekje. In April 1920, a year after the bloody Samil Independence Movement, Prince Yi Eun, the seventh son of King Gojong and also the last Crown Prince of Korea, married Princess Nashimoto-no-miya Masako of Japan. Saitō Makoto, the third governor general of Korea, celebrated the royal marriage as the unity between Japan and Korea. In May 1931, Princess Deokhye, the granddaughter of King Gojong, married Sō Takeyuki, a Japanese nobleman, and in October of the same year, Yi Geon, a grandson of King Gojong, married Matsudaira Yoshiko, a maternal cousin of Masako. In April 1937, in the puppet state of Manchukuo, Prince Pujie, younger brother of Puyi, the last Emperor of China (and the emperor of Manchukuo), married Lady Saga Hiro, a relative of the Japanese Imperial family.

To facilitate colonial intermarriage, the Japanese government set about reforming the systems of family registration in Taiwan and Korea so as to legalize the transfer of an individual registration between the colonial

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<sup>10</sup> Koyama, 1995: 109–110.

<sup>11</sup> Matsuura, 2007: 3–4.

and Japanese family. In June 1921, the Governor-General's Office of Korea enacted a law to legalize intermarriage between Japanese and Koreans [*Nai-Sen-jin tsūkon-hō*]. Although the number of intermarried couples quadrupled from 116 to 402 between 1912 and 1925, it was not high enough for those advocating the practice.<sup>12</sup> A 1929 editorial in the *Chōsen Keisatsu Shinbun* [Korean police newspaper] argued: "For the Japanese and Koreans to be in complete harmony in the future, it is a rational step for them to assimilate each other's blood by marriage."<sup>13</sup> Minami Jirō, governor general of Korea, preached in May 1939 that "Japanese and Koreans have to become one people, in terms of appearance, heart and flesh and blood."<sup>14</sup> In March 1941, the *Kokumin Sōryoku Chōsen Renmei* [Korean League for National Mobilization], a para-fascist organization in charge of overseeing Korean preparedness for a total war, even conferred special prizes on 137 Korean-Japanese couples married in the past year.<sup>15</sup> By the end of 1942, there were 2,600 Korean-Japanese married couples in Korea. In Japan proper, intermarriage occurred much more frequently. The 1939 census recorded 9,760 Korean-Japanese married couples, including common-law marriages.<sup>16</sup>

In Taiwan, there were already 273 Japanese-Taiwanese common-law marriages in 1929: 129 Taiwanese women with Japanese husbands and 144 Japanese women with Taiwanese husbands. In November 1932, the colonial authority passed a similar law legalizing the intermarriage of Japanese and Taiwanese. Subsequently, the numbers of such marriages in Taiwan did not increase dramatically, but marriages between Japanese and Taiwanese did take place in Japan proper with little social stigma.<sup>17</sup>

Japanese women played an active role in these intermarriages. In colonial Korea, as of 1921, the year intermarriage became legal, 63 of 124 such marriages, or 50.1 percent, occurred between Japanese women and Korean men. The percentage remained largely the same in 1939, in which 1,270 of 2,405 intermarried couples, or 52.8 percent, were combinations of Japanese women and Korean men. In Japan proper from 1938 to 1942, 5,458 Japanese-Korean couples registered their marriage with the Japanese

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<sup>12</sup> Suzuki, 2003: 168.

<sup>13</sup> Suzuki, 2003: 169.

<sup>14</sup> Suzuki, 2003: 174.

<sup>15</sup> Takeshita, 2000: 55.

<sup>16</sup> Kim, 1999: 33, 35.

<sup>17</sup> Huang, 2008: 134–135.

government. 96 percent of these occurred between Japanese women and Korean men.<sup>18</sup>

In Japan proper, in the absence of marriageable Japanese men due to the military draft, Korean men from a wide spectrum of social backgrounds married Japanese women in order to escape from discrimination, secure financial status, and ease the process toward permanent settlement in Japan. According to the 1939 statistics, out of 9,577 Korean men with Japanese wives, 4,464, or 46.6 percent, were manual laborers. 2,844 (29.7 percent) belonged to the service sector, 541 (5.6 percent) to the agricultural sector, and 245 (2.6 percent) to the white-collar sector. As for the social background of their Japanese wives, 25.6 percent used to work in the manual labor sector, 14 percent in the agricultural sector, and 12 percent in the service sector. In contrast, out of 183 couples of Japanese men and Korean women, 78 of the Japanese men were manual laborers and 30 of the Korean women were in the service business.<sup>19</sup> Once a Korean man married a Japanese woman, the wife's family would adopt him as a son-in-law and he would enter the Japanese *koseki* [family registration] of his wife.<sup>20</sup> The Japanese authority thus considered the willingness of Korean men to marry Japanese women a positive attitude toward Japanization.

In Taiwan, the law legalizing Japanese-Taiwanese intermarriage originally targeted elite Taiwanese men, such as those serving in the colonial administration, and educated Japanese women. The colonial administration suggested that the ideal Taiwanese woman would be bright, scientifically-minded, healthy, and willing to learn the Japanese language, but it never mentioned that they would make good wives for Japanese men. The Governor-General's Office of Taiwan anticipated that the Japanese mothers in intermarried families would raise mixed children as proper Japanese and contribute to the Japanization of Taiwan. In due time Taiwanese men with mid-level educations could consider marrying similarly educated Japanese women.<sup>21</sup> For example, a 1937 short-novel entitled *Papaya no aru machi* [A Town Lined with Papaya Trees] by Long Ying-zong portrays the struggle of a Taiwanese man who dreams of marrying a Japanese woman, becoming part of her family, and moving to Japan for a better life.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Kim, 1999: 32–33.

<sup>19</sup> Kim, 1999: 33; Takeshita, 2000: 62–69.

<sup>20</sup> Takeshita, 2000: 64–65.

<sup>21</sup> Miyazaki, 2007: 90–91.

<sup>22</sup> Hoshina, 2002: 267–268.

Western colonies never had a marital pattern in which women of the ruling power married male colonial subjects. Only after World War I did mounting hostility to interracial mixing lead governments to encourage European women to settle in the colonies and start families with European men in colonial postings.<sup>23</sup> The arrival of white women did not necessarily enhance the role of women in the colonial enterprise. In French West Africa, male colonial administrators considered white women to be narrow-minded bourgeois, who clung to social conventions unsuited to the colonial setting, and who complicated "harmonious" relations between the races.<sup>24</sup> In French Indochina, male administrators even worried that the presence of non-bourgeois white women would disturb the racial and moral hierarchy of colonial rule.<sup>25</sup>

While it was taboo for European women to produce children with local men, Japanese women produced mixed colonial offspring without disturbing what the Europeans called "colonial hierarchy."<sup>26</sup> At the end of 1930, there were approximately 16,000 children of Japanese-Korean parentage in Japan proper alone.<sup>27</sup> Contemporary literary works portrayed these children as bridging the cultures of both parents.<sup>28</sup> Yuasa Katsue's *Natsume* [Jujube] tells the story of Tarō, a Korean-Japanese boy, and of his struggle to establish his double identity in Korea. The work originally appeared in 1937 in *Chūō Kōron*, Japan's leading monthly literary magazine. Tarō's parents marry in Japan when the father is still a college student. When they move to Korea, the mother discovers that he already has three wives. As his concubine, she raises Tarō to be Japanese and to hate Korea. Eventually she leaves both Tarō and her husband. Despite knowing all this, Tarō never hates either his mother or his father, nor does he despise Japan or Korea. Nominated for the prestigious Akutagawa Prize, *Hikari no naka ni* [Into the Light], a 1939 short story by Kim Saryan, portrays a Korean-Japanese boy's courageous attempt to realize his dreams in Japan. The protagonist Minami is a Korean student at Tokyo Imperial University. He teaches English to children as a volunteer. Though he hides his Korean identity from the children, one of the boys, Yamada Haruo, accidentally discovers it and confronts him. Eventually it is revealed that Yamada's mother is a Korean who is abused by her Japanese husband.

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas, 2005: 151.

<sup>24</sup> Conklin, 1998: 69–70.

<sup>25</sup> Edwards, 1998: 113.

<sup>26</sup> For this taboo, see Thomas, 2005: 167.

<sup>27</sup> Kim, 1999: 35.

<sup>28</sup> Hoshina, 2002.

In the end Yamada accepts the Korean identity of both Minami and himself and dreams of a new future.<sup>29</sup>

Stories of Japanese-Taiwanese marriages and their children also flourished. In *Kanjō* [Emotions] by Huang Baotao, a protagonist born to a Japanese father and a Taiwanese mother strives to become the perfect Japanese man in Taiwan. *Chin Fujin* [Madame Qing] by Shōji Sōichi, winner of the Greater East Asian Literary Prize in 1943, follows the life of a Japanese woman who marries into the prestigious Qing family of Taiwan. Her half-Japanese daughter, rejected by the Qing family, eventually embraces her identity as a full Taiwanese, and becomes determined to become a symbol of Japanese-Taiwanese cooperation. At least in the world of fiction, these mixed offspring, whether in the colonies or Japan proper, had the freedom to choose their identities with pride.<sup>30</sup>

In the South Sea Mandate [*Nan'yō-chō*], the most remote component of the empire, the colonial administration condoned Japanese intermarriage with the Chamorro and Carolinians. Well-to-do Chamorro families, whose members had converted to Christianity during the Spanish and German administrations, held positions in the Japanese administration and enjoyed high socio-economic status. They freely socialized with and married Japanese. Their men even had access to Japanese prostitutes, called *famalauan benta* in Chamorro.<sup>31</sup>

In a travelogue of the South Sea published in 1934, Nonaka Fumio described the omnipresence of children of Japanese and Micronesian parentage on nearly every major island. A 1933 report on Koror public school [*kōgakkō*], Palau Island, showed that 11 out of 124 Carolinian pupils (8.9 percent) had Japanese parents. Of three Chamorro and 113 Carolinian pupils enrolled in the supplementary two-year course at Koror public school, five pupils (4.3 percent) were of mixed parentage. Since the colonial administration never issued a policy regulating the status of these children, it was up to Japanese fathers to acknowledge paternity, to include them in their family registries [*koseki*], and to obtain Japanese nationality for them. Children with Japanese nationality attended the Japanese primary schools [*shōgakkō*] along with Japanese students. Nonaka observed that most Japanese-Micronesian children lived in limbo, belonging to neither parent's society. However, he also wrote of the success story

<sup>29</sup> The entire text is available at: <http://www42.tok2.com/home/aozoranovel/ki/kim/hikarinonakani.html> [Accessed in August 2010].

<sup>30</sup> Hoshina, 2002: 269–275; Huang, S. 2003: 7–8.

<sup>31</sup> Peattie, 1988: 218–219; Dela Cruz, 2010: 99.

of a woman born to a Japanese man and a daughter of a chieftain of Pelelieu Island. She grew up as Japanese, went to Japan for a higher education, and eventually received the imperial award for her excellence in academic performance. A linguistic genius, she spoke Japanese, English, German and Spanish as well as the Chamorro and Carolinian languages. Nonaka believed that Japanese-Micronesian people could maximize their talent and succeed in life with proper education.<sup>32</sup>

*Japanese in the Tropics*

After World War I, when the League of Nations awarded Japan the former German colonies in the Marianas, Carolines, Marshall Islands, and Palau, Japan launched an aggressive economic development of the South Sea Mandate. Japan's experience there shows colonial Japan's distinctive racial approach to the tropical climate and the native islanders. As of 1919, there were 50,000 Chamorro and Carolinians in the region. Instead of exploiting the locals as a labor force, the Japanese worked on plantations.<sup>33</sup> By the end of 1939, more than 77,000 Japanese settlers lived in the South Sea Mandate side by side with some 52,000 native islanders and their ratio to was growing rapidly.<sup>34</sup>

In European colonial plantations, Westerners used Africans and other colored colonial subjects as slaves and indentured labors in the belief that their racial traits made them suited to hard labor in hot and humid climes. Arthur de Gobineau (1816–1882), one of the founders of the belief in racial inequality, argued that the Negroid, standing at the foot of the ladder of human evolution, had very dull mental faculties and was careless of his own life and that of others. Gobineau wrote: "he [the Negroid] kills willingly for the sake of killing; and this human machine, in whom it is so easy to arouse emotion, shows, in face of suffering, either a monstrous indifference or a cowardice that seeks a voluntary refuse in death."<sup>35</sup> Where the scorching sun, un-drained swamps, and insects on the great cotton, sugar, and rice plantations were thought fatal to civilized and delicate white laborers, Negroes and colored men were believed capable of

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<sup>32</sup> Iitaka, 2009: 5–7.

<sup>33</sup> Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci, 2001: 131; Crocombe, 2007: 90.

<sup>34</sup> Nomura, 2005: 151.

<sup>35</sup> Biddiss, 1970: 135.



enduring epidemic and endemic diseases and engaging in manual labor without much hardship.<sup>36</sup>

In the early twentieth century, the major Western powers continued to exploit climatic theories to justify their reliance on colored laborers in their colonies. Dr. Charles Edward Woodruff, a brigade surgeon in the U.S. army stationed in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War, warned in *The Effects of Tropical Light on White Men* (1905) that the proto-chemical effect of the ultra-violet band of the spectrum undermined the health of whites, particularly blond-haired, pale-skinned “Aryans” who lacked the pigmentation to protect their nerve protoplasm. From Singapore, Ceylon and the West Indies, to West and Central Africa, scientists and physicians concurred that white colonists would suffer from fatigue, irritability, loss of memory, hypochondria, loss of appetite, diarrhea, insomnia, headaches, depression, anemia, sexual debility, and even insanity and suicide. Therefore, they suggested that only dark-skinned, dark-haired, brown-eyed “phlegmatic” types should be allowed to work in the tropics.<sup>37</sup>

Western scientists also blamed “dirty natives” for spreading tropical diseases in crowded tropical cities such as Cape Town, Bombay, and Singapore. Sir (later Lord and 1st Baron) Frederick Lugard, governor of Hong Kong, and governor-general of Nigeria, wrote in 1919: “malarial germs—and at times those of yellow-fever also—are present in the blood of most natives, especially of native children, and their dark huts and insanitary surroundings foster mosquitoes, by which these diseases are conveyed.” He urged that Europeans should put as much distance as possible from the natives in order to avoid infection.<sup>38</sup> Based on such concerns, the British established “health resorts” on the slopes of the Himalayas where they could recuperate away from native Indians. The fear of infection by the natives justified racial segregation within the British Empire with the practice reaching its peak in the early twentieth century.<sup>39</sup>

In their earliest phase, Japanese colonial enterprises paid special attention to tropical diseases. During the summer campaign in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, which “elevated” Japan to a colonial empire, Japanese troops suffered from a severe outbreak of malaria and lost more

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<sup>36</sup> Stamp, 1956: 295–296.

<sup>37</sup> Kennedy, 1990: 113, 121–131; Anderson, 2006: 80–82, 101–102.

<sup>38</sup> Home, 1997: 126.

<sup>39</sup> Home, 1997: 125–126; Kennedy, 1990: 119. In a similar manner, Americans in the Philippines in the early twentieth century established Baguio, a meticulously planned “health-giving” town, in the mountains of Luzon, as a brigade post for the recuperation of the soldiers, away from the natives. (Anderson, 2006: 142–147)

than 2,000 men. Just as Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States established research institutes devoted to tropical medicine, the governor-general of Taiwan, after succeeding in pest control, established a research committee on climatology and epidemiology in 1909, largely in order to control malaria.<sup>40</sup> The early Japanese studies of the South Sea Mandate reflected similar concerns. Narabayashi Heizaburō, a pathologist, noticed that diseases endemic to the tropics were as responsible for the region's population decline as unsanitary living conditions and corrupt mores among the natives. For colonial development, he urged the Japanese government to use native laborers accustomed to the climate.<sup>41</sup>

Towards the 1930s, Japanese scientific interest in climatology intensified in Korea and China, but not in the South Sea Mandate. This is partly because the region was relatively free of virulent diseases such as the malaria common in tropical zones. Even diseases endemic in the South Sea Mandate such as amebic dysentery, dengue fever, and yaws (*frambesia tropica*) turned out to be easy to treat. The administrators of the South Sea Mandate aggressively built medical centers on major islands, clinics on plantations, and traveling clinics for remote islands. They introduced secure supplies of drinking water, improved house lavatories, provided better sanitation and sewage disposal facilities, and established quarantine controls at harbors.<sup>42</sup> The Japanese did not think of the tropical climate as an obstacle to their colonial activities, nor did the fear of tropical diseases lead them to segregate the Chamorro, Carolinians and other native islanders.

The presence of Japanese women grew larger in the South Sea Mandate as the sugar industry flourished and single male laborers invited their wives, sometimes through picture marriages, to join them and start a family. Some women even came to the islands as migrant workers and worked at the dried skipjack tuna [*katsuobushi*] processing factories. Women also taught at co-ed elementary schools on the islands. The tropical climate was not deemed harmful to their health. To facilitate Japanese women's higher education, *Nan'yō Kasei Jogakkō* [South Sea Girls' Domestic Science School] opened in Saipan in 1936, followed by *Saipan Kōtō Jogakkō* [Saipan Girls' High School] in 1939, and *Parao Kōtō Jogakkō* [Palau Girls' High School] in 1941.<sup>43</sup> In Saipan, the ratio of male to female Japanese

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<sup>40</sup> Setoguchi, 2006: 125–132.

<sup>41</sup> Sakano, 2005: 356–358.

<sup>42</sup> Ōgimi, 2004 [1939]: 16.

<sup>43</sup> Nomura, 2005: 56–59, 93–148.

changed from 1 to 0.65 in 1932 to 1 to 0.76 in 1937. In the South Sea Mandate as a whole, the ratio reached 1 to 0.7 by 1937.<sup>44</sup>

Administrators of the South Sea Mandate believed native islanders were lazy and unsuited to plantation work. In Australia, Pacific Islanders had already proved to be not as well-suited as anticipated for work in the harsh climate. In 1884, in Queensland, the death rate among Pacific Islanders was 50 per 1,000 per year, five times the rate among Europeans. The imperial government in London adopted a series of legislative acts in the 1880s and 1890s to restrict the employment of Pacific Islanders in particular regions. From 1902, the Queensland sugar cane industry, cutting ties with Pacific Islanders, depended on other workers.<sup>45</sup> When the native workers proved unsuitable, Western colonial administrators brought in native workers from other colonies to work the plantations. For example, after experimenting with free Africans, Madeirans, and Chinese, the colonists in British Guiana and Trinidad decided to import labor from India.<sup>46</sup>

The Japanese did not follow Western colonial practices. The Japanese themselves became laborers in their tropical plantations. Even in Taiwan, Japan's first colony, where massive stonework and wrought iron were used to build majestic European-style buildings for the colonial government to awe subject peoples and impress Western visitors with, the Japanese themselves worked as plantation laborers. In Taiwan, the native peasants had produced rice, sugar and other cash crops for centuries. But once under Japanese rule, they unionized themselves and resisted exploitation by Japanese capitalists. To supplement them, the governor-general aggressively recruited Japanese settlers as plantation laborers. As Yanaihara Tadao, Japan's leading authority on colonial administration, observed in 1929 Taiwan, the (non-Chinese) indigenous inhabitants, the (Chinese) islanders, and the Japanese settlers created a complex pattern of labor relations on rice and sugar plantations and jointly contributed to the island's growth.<sup>47</sup> Though the majority of Japanese settlers became labor aristocrats by the 1930s, one-third of the labor force of Taiwan's sugar industry remained Japanese.<sup>48</sup>

Matsue Haruji, the founder of the *Nan'yō Kōhatsu Kabushiki Gaisha* [South Seas Development Company], or *Nankō*, aggressively recruited

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<sup>44</sup> Iitaka, 1999: 120.

<sup>45</sup> Oliver, 1989: 175.

<sup>46</sup> Mohapatra, 2004: 455.

<sup>47</sup> Yanaihara, 1988 [1929]: 98–99.

<sup>48</sup> Tu, 1975: 168.

Okinawan laborers for their familiarity with the tropical climate and sugar industry. After the Okinawan laborers, who were routinely treated as inferior to the Japanese, staged a massive strike in 1928, the Nankō introduced laborers from Yamagata and Iwate Prefectures, regions in northern Japan known for long snowy winters, and with little or no history of labor disputes.<sup>49</sup> These transplants adjusted well to the tropical setting. They lived among native islanders, reclaimed land from swamps along beaches lined with mangrove trees, and cultivated sugar cane, tapioca, papaya, taro, coconuts, and coffee on plantations.<sup>50</sup> In Palau and Ponape, native islanders who brought food, seeds and plants to Japanese agricultural communities were said to have been astonished to see them working without any mechanization.<sup>51</sup>

Japanese settlers in the South Sea Mandate also succeeded in urbanization, building replicas of modern Japanese towns with modern facilities such as cafes, movie theaters, dance halls and clubs. Unlike Western colonies, where colonial rulers routinely segregated the master race and subject race as a matter of urban policy, the Japanese colonists in the South Sea Mandate did not. The Japanese worked the plantations while the Chamorro and Carolinians found employment in shops, cafes and restaurants, as well as in the sugar cane, sake brewing, and dried-fish processing industries. In Garapan, the central town of Saipan, mainland Japanese and Okinawans lived side by side with the Chamorro and Carolinians in the commercial areas.<sup>52</sup> In the thriving towns of Koror (Palau) and Colony (Ponape), native islanders enjoyed the amenities of Japanese life and acquired new wants and tastes.<sup>53</sup>

Power relations between the Japanese masters and their Chamorro subjects were sometimes even reversed. In Saipan, in both towns and plantations, Japanese industries and individuals leased and purchased large tracts of land from leading Chamorro clans, just like the Germans did during their administration. In some cases, the Japanese lessee or purchaser held a subordinate position in relation to the Chamorro landlord.<sup>54</sup> At a more subtle level, Japanese eating habits, the unkempt attire of Japanese manual laborers, and certain Japanese trades such as collecting night soil for sale as fertilizer to agricultural companies were the objects of hidden

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<sup>49</sup> Iitaka, 1999: 119–121.

<sup>50</sup> Ogimi, 1939: 146–149.

<sup>51</sup> Peattie, 1988: 219.

<sup>52</sup> Dela Cruz, 2010: 95; Ono et al., 2002: 336, 339.

<sup>53</sup> Oliver, 1989: 239.

<sup>54</sup> Oliver, 1989: 239–240; Sakano, 2005: 468.

derision by the Micronesians, leading some high-born (and westernized) Micronesians to feel that the Japanese were beneath them.<sup>55</sup>

While some Japanese held negative views about the racial traits of the Micronesian natives, they nonetheless admired them as a nautical people who had once sailed across the Pacific Ocean. Yanaihara Tadao argued that the Carolinians, considered lazy by outsiders, had ancestors who had once sailed thousands of miles across the Pacific and Indian Oceans in their search for new islands to capture and settle. Although this energy and intelligence became dormant since the destruction of their old civilization by Western outsiders, once it was awakened by the stimulus of modern civilization, they would adjust well to the modern world.<sup>56</sup>

Matsuoka Shizuo, a linguist and anthropologist, hinted at the common ancestral origin of the Japanese and native islanders of Micronesia. In 1927, he argued that in ancient times a group of people left the Philippines on the Kuroshio Current and drifted off to the northern Mariana islands. Some settled there and the remainder continued to Taiwan or Okinawa and eventually reached Japan.<sup>57</sup> Hasebe Kotondo, a physical anthropologist at the medical college of Tohoku Imperial University, concurred. Based on anthropometric data he collected from some 1,700 islanders, Hasebe claimed that the Chamorro and the Japanese shared common racial traits.<sup>58</sup> Japan's integration of the South Sea Mandate into the Japanese empire was eased by the view that Japanese and Micronesian people were racially related. Such blood ties could rationalize Japanese adaptability to the tropical climate and fully justify its advances into the South Sea.

### *Russians in the Japanese Empire*

Some authors have claimed that the psychological origin for U.S.-Japanese conflict in World War II could be found in the U.S. law excluding Japanese immigrants which was so damaging to Japan's "prestige." The Japanese government unsuccessfully requested and then demanded through diplomatic channels that the Western nations acknowledge Japan as a nation and its people as honorary whites. The Western treatment of Japan as

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<sup>55</sup> Peattie, 1988: 206, 219–220.

<sup>56</sup> Sakano, 2005: 378–379.

<sup>57</sup> Sakano, 2005: 365–366.

<sup>58</sup> Sakano, 2005: 371–372.

just another Asian nation was not only inappropriate but humiliating to a rising colonial power. Disillusioned, the Japanese attempted to escape from the Western paradigm of racial hierarchy and called for a separate racial order in which they would "collaborate" with their fellow races in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>59</sup>

The actual Japanese view of future relations with whites, however, was neither as monolithic nor as hostile as Japanese propaganda would suggest. The Japanese government never specified what the place of the white race would be in the world of the "Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere." Nor did it propose a framework for a desirable relationship with them, either equal or superior. Wartime Japan's axis alliance with Germany, and to a lesser extent with Italy, as well as its neutrality towards the Soviet Union, testified to Japan's cultural and racial resilience towards the West. During the war, the Japanese government emphasized that Japan's European allies—the Teutons (Germans) and the Latins (Italians)—shared a Japanese enthusiasm for totalitarianism, challenging the Anglo-American claim that Western civilization fought in unison for democracy.<sup>60</sup> The Japanese empire fought to "guard" Asia from Anglo-American aggression, not from "Western" civilization. Far from hoping to build a new "pure" Asia by excluding the West altogether, Japan aspired to demonstrate to the world that its empire could fuse Eastern and Western civilizations.

Japan had a good chance to prove this when Russian émigrés moved into the Japanese empire. The Japanese tolerance of Russians and Russian culture within their colonial empire deserves attention in understanding the peculiar racial rhetoric of their empire. Between 1917 and 1921, when approximately two million Russians left the country due to the Bolshevik Revolution, thousands settled in the Japanese empire.<sup>61</sup> In 1922, when the League of Nations issued the Nansen Passport, an internationally recognized identity card, as emergency relief for Russian refugees unable to get ordinary passports, the Japanese government, along with thirty other governments, moved to honor the cards. By 1924 there were 1,167 "white" (anti-Bolshevik) Russian settlers in Japan proper. In 1930 some 2,000 Russians were thought to have been living in Japan.<sup>62</sup> In addition, some 1,500 Russians, including those of Slavic, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Tatar, Serbian, Polish, Romanian and Jewish descent, settled across the Japanese empire,

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<sup>59</sup> Koshiro, 1999: 11.

<sup>60</sup> Suzuki, 1944: 12.

<sup>61</sup> Podalko, 2003: 38–39.

<sup>62</sup> Sawada, 2001: 31.

from Korea to southern Sakhalin. Manchukuo had the largest Russian population, with 40,000 to 50,000 residents.

Russians held racist attitudes towards the Japanese people, but these negative portrayals coincided with more complex images of the Japanese people being aesthetic, spiritual, hardworking, and, above all, “just like Russians.”<sup>63</sup> Race rarely became an issue for Russian émigrés in the Japanese empire. These Russians brought elements of Western culture to the Japanese empire—from classical music and ballet to confectionaries—and quickly won the affectionate name *aoi me no* [blue-eyed]. They established their unique place in Japan even as the nation shifted to isolationism in the 1930s. With no residential segregations imposed upon them, they freely practiced Christianity and their children attended Japanese schools all the way through high school and university.

The modest socioeconomic status of Russian émigrés seemed to facilitate their inclusion in Japanese society. The majority of them belonged to the working class—in contrast to other Westerners in Japan, most of whom held elite positions. Edwin Reischauer, one of America’s best-known scholars of Japan, reminisced about the racial dynamics in prewar Tokyo: “At that time almost the only Westerners in Japan were missionaries, teachers, diplomats, businessmen, and occasional tourists. I had never seen a white man doing manual labor, unless one counts the occasional forlorn Russian refugee who would trudge the streets of Tokyo selling cloth from a large pack on his shoulder.”<sup>64</sup> In 1924, there were 818 Russians, most of them heads of families legally working in Japan. Only twenty-six of them (3.2 percent) were educators, followed by eight engineers, and fourteen traders and businessmen. The rest of them, scattered across Japan, worked in low-paying jobs as bakers, dressmakers, shopkeepers, ranchers, fishermen, entertainers, musicians, and servants.<sup>65</sup> The port city of Hakodate, Hokkaido, one of the earliest ports opened to Western trade in the mid-nineteenth century, was home to some 300 Russians, most of whom worked in the fishing industry. Some Russian women also came and settled in this area as the spouses of Japanese traders and fishermen.<sup>66</sup>

In Manchukuo, Japan’s puppet state bordering China, Korea, Russia and Mongolia, the national policy nominally upheld the cosmopolitan ideal of harmonious cooperation among the five races—the Manchu, Han

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<sup>63</sup> Heldt, 1989: 213–215.

<sup>64</sup> Reischauer, 1986: 3–4.

<sup>65</sup> Podalko, 2003: 41–42.

<sup>66</sup> Shimizu, 2004.



Chinese, Mongol, Korean, and Japanese peoples. Japanese officials hoped that Russian émigrés would play a vital role as the sixth racial group in the state building. Of the 85,044 Westerners living in Manchukuo including the Kwantung region [*Kantō-shū*], 43,050 were Russians in 1933. After the Soviet Union recognized Manchukuo in 1935 and pledged nonintervention, Japanese officials in Manchukuo encouraged more Russian émigrés, some stateless and some with Chinese citizenship, to enrich the social and cultural life of Manchukuo with Western flair. While the number of Western residents dropped to 67,355 in 1936, the Russian population increased to 53,603. Soviet citizens resided alongside Russian émigrés. In 1933 there were 38,396 of these and in 1936 there were 10,168.<sup>67</sup>

As in Japan proper, Russians in Manchukuo held a diverse array of jobs. The white-collar workers included Russian Orthodox Church missionaries, bankers, businessmen, engineers, and employees of the South Manchuria Railway Company. There were also musicians, dancers, shop clerks, waiters and waitresses, security guards, barbers and manicurists, touts and barkers [*kyakuhiki*], confectioners, restaurant owners, cooks, innkeepers, peddlers, poultry farmers, milk farmers, and tailors and seamstresses.<sup>68</sup> American visitors to Manchukuo were both shocked and impressed by day-to-day Japanese-Russian interactions, which seemed a condemnation of racist Anglo-America, and in which white men worked for less than yellow men. In Harbin hotels, white Russians worked as elevator boys and courteously greeted Japanese guests.<sup>69</sup>

Indispensable to the cultural life in the Japanese empire, the Russian presence attracted fond attention from writers and journalists alike because they made the otherwise indifferent environment somewhat "cosmopolitan." In southern Sakhalin, renowned literary figures wrote about Russian children peddling sweet yeast breads in baskets at train stations as if they were enacting scenes from Hans Christian Andersen's tales, which were very popular among Japanese both young and old.<sup>70</sup> In Manchukuo, their presence was a particularly welcome feature of the state's cultural and racial diversity. Harbin postcards depicted Russian churches and Russian festivals in the city, and sometimes even Japanese people mingling

<sup>67</sup> Kaiji, 2003: 48.

<sup>68</sup> "Zairyū gaikokujin kokuseki betsu shokugyō hyō (*Shōwa 12 nen 12 gatsu matsu genzai*) [A table showing the number of foreign residents in Japan and working in various occupations, tabulated by nationality (December 1937)]." vol. II. [K-3-7-0-15-1], Diplomatic Record Office, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo.

<sup>69</sup> Stephan, 1997–1998: 9.

<sup>70</sup> Shimizu, 2003; 79.

with Russians at a posh western-style restaurant or department store.<sup>71</sup> Japanese settlers and city planners in these regions fondly preserved distinctive Russian flavors such as the *pechka*, a Russian-style fireplace. They especially appreciated their musical talents, manifested in sacred chants, Cossack choirs and symphonic orchestras. The authorities also welcomed some 8,000 Russian peasants from the Sanga (Transbaikal) region, who enriched the landscape of Manchukuo with their old-fashioned pastoral life style.<sup>72</sup>

In Manchukuo, sexual liaisons between Japanese males and Russian females were not taboo. The city of Harbin was known for “hospitable” blond and blue-eyed Russian girls who welcomed Japanese clients in fluent Japanese.<sup>73</sup> Russian-Japanese intermarriage posed no problem at all.<sup>74</sup> A Japanese travelogue on northern Manchukuo, published in 1942, depicted interracial marriages between Japanese men and white Russian women and their offspring. Portraying the resulting households as more distinctively Russian than Japanese, the author speculated that this happened because of a better Japanese command of Russian language and culture, which he called a sure sign of Japanese continental expansion. The author also explained that such interracial marriages were highly welcomed by Russian families and their relatives because of the prospect of social and economic security. Thus, these interracial households were easily assimilated. The author concludes with an affectionate portrayal

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<sup>71</sup> See, for example, the collection of postcards of “Harubin,” “Harubin sono 2,” “Harubin sono 3,” and “Harubin sono 4,” in “*Manshū Shashin-kan* [Photo Studio of Manchuria],” <http://www.geocities.jp/ramopcommand/page035.html>. See also the Nara Prefectural Library Information Center, “*Ehagaki Harubin* [Postcards of Harbin],” [http://www.library.pref.nara.jp/event/booklist/W\\_2008\\_04/hitosyo09.html](http://www.library.pref.nara.jp/event/booklist/W_2008_04/hitosyo09.html). The Nihon University College of Humanities and Sciences Museum is building a digital archive of visual images of Harbin ranging from postcards, posters, flyers, pamphlets and books to photos and motion pictures. For updated information, see [http://www.chs.nihonu.ac.jp/museum/exhibition/schedule/post\\_15.html](http://www.chs.nihonu.ac.jp/museum/exhibition/schedule/post_15.html).

<sup>72</sup> Nakamura, 1939: 381.

<sup>73</sup> Bungei Shunjū, 1984: 45–46.

<sup>74</sup> “*Gaikokujin to kekkon seru honpō-jin narabi ni konketsuji chōsa ni kansuru ken*” [Reports on Japanese nationals with foreign spouses and their mixed-blood offspring] (July 22, 1935), in “*Zai-Honpō gaikokujin ni kansuru tōkei chōsa zakken*” [Miscellaneous statistical data on foreign residents in Japan], vol. IV [K-3-7-0-15]; “*Zai Honpō gaikokujin ni kansuru tōkei chōsa zakken Zairyū gaikokujin kokuseki betsu jin’in hyō*,” vol. I [K-3-7-0-15-1], Diplomatic Record Office, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo. According to the 1935 statistics of Hyōgo Prefecture, only 8 of the 406 Russian residents were married to Japanese. This low figure was due to the fact that most Russian émigrés came to Japan as family units.

of Russian-Japanese children playing with Manchu children and wishes them a better future.<sup>75</sup>

Contemporary journal articles strongly emphasized Russia's historical interactions with Asia. These articles reminded readers of how Russia, as a Mongol tributary in the thirteenth century, had defeated and absorbed the Khanate of the Golden Horde beginning in the fourteenth century, and by the sixteenth had begun the great thrust across Siberia. They explained that the Turkic peoples—Turkmen, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kazakhs, and Kirghiz—constituted the historical, ethnic, and emotional foundation of the Soviet Union. The racial and ethnic amalgamation of nation-building, these articles claimed, had led residents of Russia to possess certain Asian characteristics.<sup>76</sup> An essay in *Gaikō Jihō* [Diplomatic Review] in May 1944 argued that Russia (the Soviet Union) was a dualistic nation [*ryōmenteki kokka*] that embodied the geographical and racial essences of Europe and Asia. Since modern Japan had also acquired a dualistic national character by assimilating to Western civilization while retaining its distinctive Asianness, Russia shared certain fundamental founding principles with Japan, which made co-existence easy.<sup>77</sup>

The anticipation of fuller Russian integration into the Japanese empire even induced a hope of "Asianizing" them. Prince Higashikuni Naruhiko, along with Ishiwara Kanji of the Kwantung Army and Prime Minister Koiso Kuniaki, set a goal of sensitizing Russians to their Asian identity. Prince Higashikuni wrote the following in his private journal between 1942 and 1944: "Japan has to give the Soviet Union a keen awareness of being a member of Asia so that it will never stand on the side of the whites"; "Stalin is aware of and proud of being Asian, so it's necessary to have the Soviet people feel the same way..."; and "We have to try to help the Soviet people develop an Asian identity so we can stand together against Anglo-America."<sup>78</sup>

Even when experimenting with multi-ethnic and multi-racial state building in Manchuria, Tokyo never appreciated the United States as a nation of immigrants. With their knowledge of American white supremacy, ordinary Japanese people saw blacks, Jews, American Indians and, above all, Asians as permanent outcasts in American society and believed

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<sup>75</sup> Fukuda, 1942: 208–217.

<sup>76</sup> Hasegawa, 1943: 34–38; Chiba, 1943: 4–12.

<sup>77</sup> Komuro, 1944: 4.

<sup>78</sup> Higashikuni, 1957: 103, 107, 147, 184.

this racial and ethnic schism weakened the nation.<sup>79</sup> In contrast, the Japanese empire appreciated how Russian émigrés gave Japan's Pan-Asianism the luster of East-West cosmopolitanism.

### *Epilogue*

The Japanese empire's momentum for a Eurasian-Pacific melting pot of races somewhat dissipated as its military forces advanced into the European colonies of Southeast Asia and occupied French Indochina, the Dutch East Indies, British Malaya and Burma, and the Philippines. In the early 1940s Japanese anthropologists began studying mixed-blooded children born between Japanese soldiers and women of Southeast Asia considering them as "belonging to the lower level of culture" and advocated avoiding miscegenation at all costs.<sup>80</sup> Koya Toshio, a scholar of racial hygiene studies and an admirer of Nazi eugenic policies, headed a research department in the Ministry of Health and Welfare and claimed (in 1941) that the Japanese, as the most superior race in the Orient, should avoid miscegenation and prevent all the biological and social problems caused by mixed marriages.

Towards that end, the *Dai-Tōa Kensetsu Shingikai* [Advisory committee for the construction of Greater East Asia], under the auspices of the prime minister, proposed the residential segregation of Japanese and natives.<sup>81</sup> In 1943, the Ministry of Health and Welfare issued a comprehensive guide for policymakers and administrators entitled *Yamato minzoku o chūkaku to suru sekai seisaku no kentō* [An investigation of global policy centering on the Yamato race] and again advised against intermarriage and miscegenation.<sup>82</sup> The report criticized widespread intermarriages between Japanese women and colonial men as violations of the universal pattern

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<sup>79</sup> Koshiro, 1999: 63–64. Surprisingly no major study has been carried out concerning wartime Japanese understanding of Americans and their society, with the exception of John Dower's *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (Dower, 1986), which focuses on the slogan "*Kichiku BeiEi* [Demonic and beastly Anglo-America]." The difficulty of finding records mentioning America may be attributed to the censorship that prohibited any reference to the enemy. My 1999 book discusses the popular Japanese understanding of American racism immediately after the war, and allows a glimpse into their wartime view (Koshiro, 1999).

<sup>80</sup> Sakano, 2005: 446–447.

<sup>81</sup> Sakano, 2005: 448.

<sup>82</sup> Dower, 1986: 275–277.

of relationships in which men of the conquering race should wed women of the conquered race.<sup>83</sup>

Such shifts in Japanese attitudes toward intermarriage may be explained partially by an urgent need to adopt the Western "scientific" taboo on miscegenation in occupying their colonies in Southeast Asia. Under the "Agreement for Cultural Cooperation between Japan and Germany" signed in November 1939, Japan asked Germany to send them accounts of racial and ethnological studies conducted in French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies so they might study the people and how to rule them. The *Minzoku Kenkyūjo* [Institute of Ethnology], established by the government in 1943, housed tens of thousands of books and journals, as well as thousands of specimens, confiscated from the libraries and research institutes located in the former British, French, and Dutch colonies. Japanese scholars expected that using the enemies' scientific research would allow them to quickly secure the occupation of Southeast Asia.<sup>84</sup>

During this time, intermarriage was still tolerated in Taiwan, Korea and Manchukuo—all integral parts of Japan's colonial empire. The Ministry of Greater East Asia, which was effectively controlled by the Army, did not plan to annex the militarily occupied territories of Southeast Asia as external territories of the Japanese empire. It attempted to establish puppet states in the Dutch East Indies, British Malaya and Burma as well as the Philippines, but allowed French Indochina to remain nominally under French administration. Given the impossibility of a massive and swift transplant of Japanese settlers and laborers into these occupied territories, the Army had to establish Japanese minority rule by other means in a relatively short time. The Japanization of the huge populations of different races of Southeast Asia through intermarriage would be impossible to achieve in just a few years, particularly by means of stationing Japanese troops and little else.<sup>85</sup> The continuation of the century-old Western racial policy probably made sense, at least as a makeshift policy. The war-time disinclination towards intermarriage did not necessarily reflect the national adoption of any new radical racial theory.

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<sup>83</sup> Takeshita, 2000: 56–57.

<sup>84</sup> Nakao, 1997: 49–51.

<sup>85</sup> Sakano, 2005: Chapter 7. In spite of the military's anti-miscegenation position in Southeast Asia, Japanese soldiers fathered children in Indonesia, Thailand, Burma and the Philippines and left them behind, unacknowledged, as they returned to Japan. After the war, their presence became a social issue along with the mixed race children born to American fathers and Japanese mothers during the U.S. military occupation of Japan (Koshiro, 1999: 176).

As the Japanese military occupied Southeast Asia, the scientific arguments concerning the impact of the tropical climate on Japanese health, intellect, and psychology resurfaced with a new vigor. Works such as *Nihonjin to nettai eisei* [The Japanese and tropical hygiene] (1942) by Ogura Seitarō and Katō Michio and *Nettai seikatsu mondai* [Problems of life in a tropical climate] (1943) by Kuno Yasu reiterated that the Japanese, retaining larger amounts of melanin and a larger number of sweat glands than those of the white race, had a superior resistance to the tropical sun and heat-related fatigue. They confirmed that the higher birth rate for the Japanese in Hawaii and the South Sea demonstrated a higher degree of Japanese adaptability to a hot environment.<sup>86</sup> But these conventional arguments did not suggest superior Japanese qualifications for military leadership in tropical settings.

A rival argument emerged to do just that. Kiyono Kenji, a medical scientist and anthropologist who also acted as a top adviser to Unit 731, recommended abolishing Japanese physical labor in the tropics.<sup>87</sup> If they continued, he warned, they would lose their capacity for leadership and quickly degenerate to become just like the natives. In 1943, Nakayama Eiji published *Nihonjin no nettai tekiōsei* [The Japanese adaptability to the tropics] under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and recommended that the Japanese, incapable of maximizing their talent under the tropical sun, had better quit working as laborers and learn to instruct the local populace to work instead.<sup>88</sup> Since no scientific research seemed to have been conducted to sustain such arguments, it is highly likely that the Japanese adopted the Western theory as their makeshift policy in that regard too.

Japanese attitudes towards race metamorphosed after the war. The Japanese overseas were all repatriated to Japan's main islands and the vanquished Japanese began to live according to the rules of white supremacy under the U.S. military occupation of Japan. As they acquiesced to American-style racial segregation, anti-fraternization, and anti-miscegenation, the Japanese developed a twisted self-awareness of themselves as a distinct racial group, albeit one inferior to white Americans, which led to the creation of an ethnically pure polity.<sup>89</sup> Tsuda Sōkichi, a scholar of

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<sup>86</sup> Koshiro, 1999: 150.

<sup>87</sup> Unit 731 was a top secret biological and chemical warfare research and development unit of the Kwantung Army.

<sup>88</sup> Sakano, 2005: 449–453.

<sup>89</sup> Koshiro, 1999: 49ff.

ancient Japanese history who had criticized the reliance of imperial history on mythology before the war, argued (in 1946) that the Japanese had long lived on their isolated archipelago with no substantial contacts with outsiders. The Japanese thus formed a distinctive people, constituting the nation of Japan while cultivating spontaneous affection for the imperial family that had emerged from it.<sup>90</sup> Hasebe Kotondo, the anthropologist who once theorized the racial connection between the Japanese and Chamorro people, put forth the opposite argument in his 1949 article. He argued that the Japanese had never bred with others but had evolved as a pure group of people since the Paleolithic period.<sup>91</sup>

Other scholars continued to support the view which suggested ancient Japan was a nation of a mixed people. In 1949, the archaeologist Egami Namio introduced the idea that horse-riding warriors had invaded the islands from north Asia, founded the imperial family, and unified the nation in the Yamato period.<sup>92</sup> However, the defeated nation found it easier to live with the view of Japan as a homogeneous nation-state—with one race, one culture, and one language—since time immemorial. With such perceptions, Japanese polemicists could offer a post-hoc justification of the necessary loss of the colonial empire. Considering these writings passed the censorship of the military occupation, it seems the U.S. government endorsed this new identity of the Japanese as a "pure" race, content with living only on its own islands, ensconced in the U.S. defense perimeter and detached from both the Eurasian continent and the Pacific both physically and metaphysically.<sup>93</sup>

Postwar Japan no longer had any use for the rhetoric of an East Asian melting pot. The Japanese people no longer considered themselves descendants of immigrants from the Asia-Pacific region. Nor did they view their neighbors as sharing the same ancestral origins. They never realized the potential of their colonial empire being a melting pot which

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<sup>90</sup> Oguma, 1995: 340–341.

<sup>91</sup> Oguma, 1995: 346–348.

<sup>92</sup> Oguma, 1995: 353.

<sup>93</sup> The view of Japanese resilience to the tropical climate was revived with a twist. The postwar population explosion compelled the Japanese to find a new place to send the surplus population. With the immigration to the United States, Canada, and Australia impossible due to their Asian exclusion policy, Japanese politicians and activists claimed that the Japanese were equal to whites in terms of intellectual capacity but were even much more versatile in terms of physical adaptability to a tropical climate. With a rare combination of physiological and intellectual quality, the new Japanese émigrés would be able to develop any region as a service to the welfare of the entire world. Such arguments helped spearhead postwar Japanese emigration overseas, primarily to Central and South America, and particularly the Amazon Valley as plantation laborers (Koshiro 1999: 150–154).



might be referred to as Pan Asia. The world currently regards Japan as the most tenaciously insular among the world's top industrial nations. Today's Japan stands at the crossroads of becoming multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and even multi-racial as the pace of globalization accelerates. By shedding light on the Japanese empire's unique racial relationship with its colonial subjects and émigrés, the Japanese people might find a way to reconnect with the regions they once occupied as colonies and begin a path toward reconciliation. This will hopefully destroy the illusion that Japanese people can exist on their own in the sanctuary of their insular nation.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### CATEGORICAL CONFUSION: PRESIDENT OBAMA AS A CASE STUDY OF RACIALIZED PRACTICES IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

Christine R. Yano

On the 20th of January 2009, Barack Obama rose to the headlines as the first United States President of African American and mixed-race ancestry. Millions around the globe celebrated his victory in what was dubbed “Obamamania,” including highly enthusiastic fans in Japan. A Gallup Poll conducted in Japan during the summer of 2008 indicated that approximately 66 percent preferred Obama over John McCain (15 percent) as President of the United States.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, a 22-Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey shows that in 2009, 85 percent of Japanese respondents believed that President Obama “will do [the] right thing in world affairs.”<sup>2</sup> Examining Japan’s 2008 and 2009 periods of Obamamania provides a critical case study in public dialogues, controversies, and media representations concerning race.

This is particularly pertinent given contemporary attitudes towards African Americans in Japan—attitudes that lay bare a complex history of racialized ideology and practices. This history includes, on the one hand, a denigration based on skin color and placement within a global power-based hierarchy, as well as damning statements on African Americans made by no less than Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro in the 1980s. On the other hand, it also includes a media-fueled idolization of African Americans in sports and entertainment, as well as hypersexualized attitudes and tensions associated with United States military bases in Japan and the African Americans stationed there. These often contradictory attitudes and practices contribute to what I call “categorical confusion”<sup>3</sup>—that is to say, an inconsistency between blood-based

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<sup>1</sup> Furuya, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center Publications, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> I borrow the term “categorical confusion” from Anne Anlin Cheng’s work on the American-born, French-famed black entertainer Josephine Baker. Cheng (2011:5) interprets Baker as a celebrated and contradictory figure of Modernism, whose image entwines with Primitivism in a crisis of race, style, and subjectivity. The categorical confusion of Baker

ideas and assessments drawn from other spheres of influence in Japan. This cognitive discomfort creates a slippage that selectively celebrates and denigrates African American individuals. Categorical confusion does not call into question the actual identity—individuals are unambiguously African American, often following the American one-drop rule, whereby any amount of African blood automatically identifies the individual as black.<sup>4</sup> However, it does arise in peoples' interpretations of the category and the actions that result from them, framing identities within different contexts and meanings.

This chapter examines some of the issues surrounding race in contemporary Japan, and specifically insofar as they relate to African Americans, by using the commodification and consumption of the image of Barack Obama as a case study. Although some may argue that Obama is far too exceptional to be utilized as a case study, I contend that his very celebrity and singularity place racialized attitudes in the spotlight. We must thus examine both the commonalities and the contingencies that Obama brings to the discussion of race in Japan. This chapter asks not only how Barack Obama is racialized as black in Japan, but also how the Japanese might interpret Obama, including the possibility of overcoming 'blackness.' It also seeks to examine the conditions and symbols of Obama's racialization, and the manner in which skin (as both color and surface) acts as a metaphor in social constructions of power. Our discussion will also suggest some broader implications of the assumptions and practices of race that go beyond Obama particularly in a country that has built a certain degree of national pride around its putative racial-cultural homogeneity. In the process of preparing this study, I traveled to the town of Obama in Fukui prefecture during the summer of 2009 and interviewed a number of key figures. I have also assembled a collection of Obama memorabilia sold in Japan, and performed a textual analysis of the Japanese media coverage of Obama's election and subsequent presidency.

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rests not only in mixing the primitive and the modern, but also in her use of bare skin as an ultimately modern surface.

<sup>4</sup> The one-drop belief holds true in Japan as well, specifically through the notion of *kurosuji* ["black stock," including *burakumin* or outcastes] and *shirosuji* ["white stock," Japanese]. The mixed-blood product of such miscegenation (i.e., the child of *burakumin* and "untainted" Japanese) is classified as forever sullied and effectively turned "black" (Robertson, 2005: 336–337).

*Obamamania in Japan*

Let me first turn to the phenomenon of Obamamania in Japan, describing its scope and fervor—indeed, the “mania”—through a series of snapshots. The overall picture painted by these snapshots is one of a Japan that is embracing Barack Obama as an African American, as someone whose popularity and charisma almost makes people forget race, or even proffer the possibility of going beyond race into an idealized condition of post-raciality. Yet, race—whether black or, to a lesser degree, biracial—remains an undeniable part of Obama’s public perception. It is the very visibility of skin interpreted as a defining component of identity that cannot be erased. This contradiction highlights the stubbornness of racialized ideology in Japan and elsewhere, and thus lies at the foundation of such categorical confusion.

**Snapshot #1.** The remote Japanese fishing village of Obama (population 32,000, Fukui prefecture, Japan) has adopted a new prodigal son—President Barack Obama. On the sole basis of a shared name, the village’s residents and officials have, since the United States presidential campaign and continuing to the present, asserted a long-distance and immediate commercial connection to Barack Obama through merchandising, performing troupes, and general enthusiasm. As a result, the village of Obama has become a media sensation in Japan and elsewhere. With a view to economic revitalization (i.e., tourism) and place branding, the linking of this remote seaport to the U.S. President has been celebrated with festivals, parades, and—most importantly—an array of souvenir goods. In short, Barack Obama has become one of Obama’s primary sources of branding. Furthermore, the newly established “Obama Girls and Boys” hula troupe, created in honor of the Hawaii-born-and-raised President has performed at the village’s celebration of the U.S. Presidential inauguration, and traveled to Hawaii in March 2009 to perform at the Honolulu Festival. The head of the Obama Support Group in Obama discusses the President’s appeal, describing him variably as “tall and stylish and with a good voice” and “good looking, tall, and cool.”<sup>5</sup> Above all, it is President Obama’s “cool” factor that contributes greatly to his popularity. For a small, isolated seaport such as Obama, the borrowed celebrity created on Barack Obama’s coat-tails may be seen as a source of communal pride, village identity, and, most importantly, tourism-derived revenue.

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<sup>5</sup> Personal communication, 6 November 2009.

**Snapshot #2.** An enormous variety of goods trail the celebrity of President Obama in Japan, as elsewhere. These capitalize on the notion of a souvenir—a physical memento of a place, person, or event—and include T-shirts, chopsticks, key chains, masks, and foodstuffs. Barack Obama has, in effect, become a place (representing the town of Obama), a person (the individual, as well as the position of U.S. President), and an event (particularly during the election campaign) at the same time. One of the most notable among these Japanese goods is an action-figure doll that displays a provocative—and some might say fetishized—interpretation of the President. The standard doll comes dressed in a navy business suit. However, one fan posted images of his own customizations of the Obama action figure doll on his website. These include an arsenal of cross-fantasy, superhero accessories: Dirty Harry pistol, Terminator machine-gun, samurai sword, Star-Wars weaponry, and even a *futon* [Japanese quilt], tatami mat, and plate with *mikan* [Japanese tangerines]. The flexibility with which Barack Obama is configured and reconfigured in the Japanese marketplace becomes part of his commodity fetishization.

**Snapshot #3.** President Obama's speeches, too, have been part of this wave of popularity. Published as a compilation in English with a Japanese translation and an accompanying CD, *The Speeches of Barack Obama* (Asahi Press, 2008, 1050 yen) have become a best-selling source of not only English-language instruction, but also commodified, model citizenship. Two months after its release in November 2008, the book had already sold more than 420,000 copies (any book in Japan selling more than 100,000 copies is considered a big success). The book provides annotations on the meaning and significance of Obama's words, creating a primer on being a responsible, global citizen—Obama-style. The publication thus analyzes Obama's speeches for the enunciation of political ideas alongside the pronunciation of his words.

**Snapshot #4.** The manifestations of Obamamania in Japan thus far give no hint that the American president is anything but white. However, there is more. Obamamania in Japan also includes canned coffee decorated with Obama's figure and sold by Suntory as "Black Boss" during the U.S. presidential campaign. Obama's visage graces other comestibles as well. In February 2009, the head of Tokyo Sushi Academy, Chef Kawasumi Ken, created an Obama sushi roll and display. Using black sesame for hair and fish paste for teeth, Kawasumi created a likeness of Obama's face and arranged it in a platter with an American flag (of red tuna, raw squid, and

rice), iconic smiley faces, “Yes we can,” and “USA” decor.<sup>6</sup> The sushi depiction of Obama predictably portrayed him as black—resulting in a form of culinary negritude.

**Snapshot #5.** Obamamania includes more blackface than found in simple sushi. In 2008, Japanese comedian Satō Nozomu (“Mr. Notchi”) created a popular persona imitating Barack Obama. Claiming that his wife noticed a resemblance between himself and the then-candidate, Satō built on the slim would-be connection to engage in *monomane* [entertaining mimicry]. In “blackface” (through tanning salons) and vague imitation of the speech and bodily mannerisms of the American president, Mr. Notchi performed before primarily Japanese audiences. His trademark comedic slogan became “Yes, we can!” and, indeed, Mr. Notchi’s career found a temporary boost by performances of his black-face version of Barack Obama.<sup>7</sup>

**Snapshot #6.** Even more controversially, Obamamania includes the now infamous 2008 television advertisement for cell phone company E-Mobile depicting an Obama-like monkey [Japanese macaque; *Macacus fuscatus*] dressed in a suit and gesturing before cheering crowds holding signs that read “CHANGE.”<sup>8</sup> The advertisement ends with a close-up of the monkey’s face as it sheds a tear, presumably showing just how close to human it is. In fact, the advertisement plays with the monkey’s (and presumably Obama’s) in-between-ness, hovering between human and animal as it wears suits, stands before a cheering crowd, holds a cell phone, and in the end, cries, even as it clearly belongs to the simian species. After one month, the advertisement was pulled from the airwaves after protests led by African Americans resident in Japan. (I will return to the E-Mobile controversy later.)

**Snapshot #7.** In June 2009, journalist Hirata Itsuko, apparently a big fan of Barack Obama, along with illustrator Kawana Kiju, published a small English-teaching book entitled *Yes, I Can with Obama*. Taking bits and pieces of Obama’s life, the book constructs forty short lessons in English, from his birth in Honolulu to his election. Far more questionable than the prose are the illustrations that accompany it, depicting Obama quite clearly and consistently as a monkey. Through the illustrations, Obama becomes

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<sup>6</sup> Kawasumi, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> YouTube, 2010b.

<sup>8</sup> YouTube, 2010b.

an exotic, sometimes hapless, sometimes cowering, simian figure, one of a menagerie of animals that eventually occupies the White House.

*Complexities of Race Talk, Images and Practices*

What are we to make of these sometimes laudatory, sometimes damning depictions and practices surrounding Obamamania in Japan? How do these present a case study of the categorical confusion that arises from the complexities of ideology, history, and media in racialized practices that encompass nations and cultures? Beginning with his presidential campaign and extending into at least the beginning of his presidency, Japanese citizens have sought in Obama an exemplar of dynamism and a mantra of change. It is a mantra that speaks to many Japanese disaffected by their own political system. And it is a mantra that allowed, among other things, Hatoyama Yukio of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) to unseat the fifty-five year domination of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and gain the Prime Ministership in August 2009.

Among the revolutionary elements of change residing in the election of Barack Obama is that of race, Obama being the first mixed-blood, African American president. When I ask many of his fans in Japan about this, they claim that Obama's race (whether African American or mixed) plays little or no part in his image or popularity, and that he thus heralds the possibility and acceptability in Japan and elsewhere of a "post-racial" figure. And yet, Japan is a country whose blood ideology persists. This ideology plays a part in defining who is or may be "Japanese," whether legally, culturally, or racially. It is an ideology displayed within the context of historic relations with the United States and its own racialism. Note here that I use both terms "racialism" and "racism." The former I take to mean the more general process of racialization—that is, creating and practicing categories on the basis of race. The latter I take to mean the process of creating and practicing *hierarchical* and typically *negative* categories on the basis of race. Racialism is the broad category that includes racism. The popularity of Barack Obama must thus be placed against a history of African American encounters and images in Japan. The questions that this context invokes thus revolve around the categorical confusion that results. How is Obama's purported post-racality inflected by the persistence of blood ideology in contemporary Japan? How does race, in this instance, take on different guises, whether vetted as commodities or nullified by humor?



Let me point out that race (or post-race) is not the only source of Obama-imaging in Japan. There are many other positive elements, including his speech-making, his devotion to his family and his abundant charisma. And yet, race (or post-race) is a fundamental element of who he is and how he is perceived in Japan. In many ways, it is part of his “cool” quotient, as reflected in a poster in Obama advertising a rock concert held on 19 July 2009. The poster displays a picture of Barack Obama with his arms crossed, dressed in a suit (“Men in Black” style),<sup>9</sup> with his eyes covered, and a star labeled “Yes, we can!” The graffiti-styled text reads: “Obama is rock and roll. Summer of Love. Summer of Obama. Seaside Music Jam.” This is black masculinity as mainstream-appropriated, and as sub-culturally cool—even if the would-be-subcultural figure sits, ironically, at the center of global power. The ironies of this juxtaposition are thus precisely enabled by a racialized categorical confusion.

### *Blood Ideology in Japan*

Let me turn to a discussion of blood ideology in Japan, especially since this forms the basis of what some might call the “inevitable racialism” of Obama, in spite of “post-racial” ideals. Much of the belief in the power of blood rests in upholding distinctions made between purity and pollution, particularly as emphasized in Shinto (Japan’s indigenous belief system). The impure include both those of non-Japanese blood, as well as those of mixed blood.<sup>10</sup> It is easy to see where Barack Obama falls in both categories.<sup>11</sup>

What is attributed to blood? *Chi no tsunagari* [blood attributes] include both physical (black hair, skin color, bodily form) and spiritual

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<sup>9</sup> A 1997 American science fiction action-comedy film featuring actors Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith, directed by Barry Sonnenfeld. My reference to the film derives not only from the dark suit, white shirt, and narrow tie that Obama wears in the poster, but also from the cross-armed stance. In the film, the actors more typically wore dark glasses; in the poster, Obama’s eyes are covered with a graphic bar.

<sup>10</sup> Note that within Japanese eugenics, two conflicting positions held sway: 1) the pure-blood [*junketsu*] position, that upheld the continuing purity of a Japanese bloodline; and 2) a mixed-blood (*konketsu*) position that upheld the virtues of “hybrid vigor” mixing Japanese and non-Japanese blood (Robertson, 2005: 335). In general, the pure-blood position tends to be more favored in Japan.

<sup>11</sup> Note that attitudes towards mixed-race individuals may be changing. From the late twentieth century onwards, the aesthetic of young, mixed-race (Asian-white) female models finds favor in the Japanese fashion industry.

characteristics, such as *Yamato damashii* [Japanese spirit]. These blood attributes paint a picture of not just the ideal person, but also the true model citizen, the full-fledged Japanese. Here, the isomorphism between race, nation and culture makes blood a powerful common denominator. What is more telling are those traits considered indicative of “bad” or “polluted” blood. These include mental illness, physical deformity, leprosy, criminality, suicide, epilepsy, color-blindness, hemophilia, feeble-mindedness, alcoholism, and sexual misconduct, however defined.<sup>12</sup> Japan is thus considered a *ketsuen shūdan* [community of blood], reinforced by geographic isolation, religion, economics, pariah ostracism, politics, filial piety, and arranged marriages. At the head of that community is the emperor, who derives his place through purportedly unbroken blood ties to the ancestral deities that originated from the Sun Goddess. Even though other countries share similar beliefs in the power of blood, Japan’s may be considered that much more compelling because of its claim to this uninterrupted imperial ancestral line.<sup>13</sup> As Jennifer Robertson argues: “Blood remains an organizing metaphor for profoundly significant, fundamental, and perduring assumptions about Japaneseness and otherness; it is invoked as a determining agent of kinship, *mentalité*, national identity, and cultural uniqueness. . . . The link between blood and nationality is certainly not unique to Japan, but it is inflected in ways that distinguish the Japanese phenomenon from others.”<sup>14</sup>

The distinction between purity and pollution is not the only issue in Japan’s blood ideology of. Of equal importance is a hierarchy among different races, determined by the color of their skin and the placement of the Japanese within this hierarchy. Long before they ever made contact with Europeans or Africans, the Japanese associated white skin with beauty, purity, wealth, and status.<sup>15</sup> Darker skin symbolized the negation of these elements, although the exact components of that negation were not clearly drawn. These indigenous notions combined with highly racialized Western ideas. Notions of scientific racism flourished in Europe and America at about the same time that the Meiji government of Japan (1868–1912) sought to import Western ideas as part of Japan’s modernization project.<sup>16</sup> Notions of race thus rode the coat tails of modernity,

<sup>12</sup> Hayashida, 1976: 138.

<sup>13</sup> Hayashida, 1976: 129–130.

<sup>14</sup> Robertson, 2005: 329.

<sup>15</sup> Hayashida, 1976: 118.

<sup>16</sup> Dower, 1986: 204.

prestige, and power. Meiji intellectuals believed in an evolutionary array of cultures, with white-skinned people on top, yellow-skinned people in the middle, and black-skinned people on the bottom next to apes.<sup>17</sup> On a physical level and in the context of world power, whites were superior, with their whiter skin (more specifically, a different kind of whiteness) and larger bodies. However, in a domestic context, Japanese skins and bodies were considered to be discontinuous with those of whites, and therefore not of a comparable scale. Japanese skins and bodies were considered to be the most appropriate for the particular conditions of Japan. The Japanese considered themselves the whitest among the Asians, and thus the most racially and morally superior. Therefore, in the larger scheme of things, Japanese—in contradistinction with other Asians—became a kind of “near white.”

This hierarchical ambiguity held no place in the evaluations of darker skin, including that of Pacific Islanders, Latins, Africans, and African Americans. There was no question that blackness was undesirable, with its symbolic associations with death, vice, despair, depression, evil, and uncleanness.<sup>18</sup> In Japanese history, black skin indicated an unequivocally lower status, reinforced by images of outdoor, manual labor. The Japanese also utilized another gauge of hierarchy that focused less on race and more on purity. This was the purported moral superiority of Japanese. As John Dower puts it, although Japanese felt they could not always necessarily claim global physical or intellectual superiority, what they could claim was moral superiority.<sup>19</sup> This claim of virtuousness was made on the basis of the “pure” blood-based lineage of the emperor in combination with the exceptional homogeneity of the people. By this line of thinking, to be of pure blood was to be morally superior to others who could not make this claim.<sup>20</sup> Barack Obama, then, by virtue of his mixed race and his African blood falls doubly short among those who hold fast to this past ideology. Here rests one part of the category to be “confused” in a contemporary setting.

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<sup>17</sup> Russell, 1996: 24.

<sup>18</sup> Wagatsuma, 1967: 431; quoted in Hayashida 1976: 119.

<sup>19</sup> Dower, 1986: 205.

<sup>20</sup> The treatment of mixed-blood orphans after World War II is an interesting case in point in terms of race. Those orphans who were half-white were accorded better status than those who were half-black. See Koshiro, 1999: 166.

*African Americans in Japan*

This kind of negative attitude towards blackness and mixed-race shapes any interactions with and images of African Americans in Japan. This does not mean that there cannot be African American heroes in contemporary Japan, especially from the entertainment, sports, and fashion worlds, such as Michael Jackson, Michael Jordan, and Naomi Campbell. Nor does it suggest that in particular times there cannot be a certain “cool” quotient attached to African American (or African-derived) cultural expression, especially jazz, hip hop, and reggae.<sup>21</sup> But it does suggest that Japan’s long history of uniqueness and ascription helped foster latent notions of racial uniqueness and implicit superiority. In interacting with the West and its forms of racism and in defining the world situation from the late nineteenth century onwards in racialized terms, Japan began not only to adopt racial ideas from the West but also to refine and elaborate upon indigenous notions. The result of this history is a persistent and complex racialized distance perceived between Japanese and African Americans.

This can be expressed in indigenous relational terms as the *uchi* [inside] and *soto* [outside] divide. These divides provide a spatialized definition of affiliation and identity, helping conceptualize who might be considered a stranger (*soto*) to oneself (*uchi*). Note that *soto* expresses only distance, but not necessarily hierarchy. Thus, a pedestal can be a distant position from oneself. The ironic, ambivalent workings of racialized distance can simultaneously place blacks on a high pedestal of “cool” global pop culture dominated by the United States and its African American heritage, while retaining a hint of their constructed simian presence.<sup>22</sup> Here, the overarching *soto* process works both to elevate and to demean. In fact, it is this *soto* simian mix—a blend that can be infantilized, sexualized, dehumanized, and/or commodified—that becomes the racialized trope of the African American image in Japan.

It did not necessarily start out this way. In spite of the blood ideology and notions of pollution that would lead to a conflation of Africans and African Americans, the Japanese initially recognized the very distinct difference between the two based on their respective nationalities. As Koshiro Yukiko explains: “[To Japanese eyes,] African Americans [in contrast with Africans] were colored *yet* modern and westernized,” and thus subject to admiration as citizens of an “advanced” nation. In this, then, nationality

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<sup>21</sup> Atkins, 2001; Condry, 2006; Sterling, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Condry, 2006: 38–41.

trumped race—or, more precisely, one's citizenship as a person of color who could belong to a "modern and westernized" nation became a mark of achievement.<sup>23</sup> However, over time, and as Japan gained confidence in its own ability to progress to a "higher level of civilization" along with white westerners, the evaluation of African Americans gave way to more racialized, indeed "Westernized" beliefs that denigrated blacks.<sup>24</sup> In this sense, then, to be modern was to accept the racialized, discriminatory attitudes of Euroamerica. This flip-flop from wanting to join African Americans as fellow people of color to adopting a new distancing "near-white" stance circumscribes what has been called "Japan's dualistic racial identity."<sup>25</sup>

Those discriminatory attitudes—borrowed in part from white racist attitudes conveyed in earlier centuries, set the stage for ongoing productions of African American stereotypes, often characterized by simian undertones that sound all too familiar within a Euroamerican context.<sup>26</sup> The *soto*-simian blend can prompt desire as well as disdain,<sup>27</sup> and adulation as well as fear, placing African Americans at a distance from the Japanese. Even when the "cool" of the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s combines with the mainstreaming of African American music as pop, and when that "cool" develops into a heated frenzy over black superstars, there is still a sense of the ongoing and underlying *soto* distance. 1990s and 2000s subcultural Japanese youth see African American forms such as rap and reggae as a means for identifying with other people of color—in style, if not in substance.<sup>28</sup> These attitudes do little to diminish a sense of distance between African Americans and mainstream Japanese.<sup>29</sup>

This is a distance that can potentially be broached through cooptation and commodification. One example rests in the English-language book I

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<sup>23</sup> Koshiro, 2003: 185.

<sup>24</sup> Koshiro, 2003: 186.

<sup>25</sup> Koshiro, 2003: 186.

<sup>26</sup> Creighton, 1997: 224; Russell, 1996: 35. Noteworthy examples of European simian images relating to Japan include the successful late nineteenth-century novel *Madame Chrysanthème*, in which an older woman is derogatorily described as "an old monkey" (Loti, 2007 [1887]: 94), and the 1940s wartime descriptions of Japanese as "yellow monkeys," or squatting in the trees with monkeys, or as monkeys with helmets and machine guns (Dower, 1986: 37, 85, 88). As John Dower (1986: 85) points out, an American radio broadcaster linked the Japanese to monkeys in two ways: "first, the monkey in the zoo imitates his trainer; secondly, 'under his fur, he's still a savage little beast.'"

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Kelsky, 2001.

<sup>28</sup> Condry, 2006; Sterling, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of Japanese attitudes towards African Americans, see Russell, 1991, with the subtitle *Mondai wa "Chibikuro Sanbo" dake de wa nai* [The problem is not only "Little Black Sambo"].

described earlier, *Yes, I Can with Obama* (2009) by Hirata Itsuko. In some ways, a large part of the dichotomy I discuss rests in the construction of the book: the front cover displays a photo of a serious, speech-making Barack Obama while the back cover is a cartoon drawing of a baby monkey Obama, smirking and wearing a T-shirt that says "I CAN." If one considers these to be front- and back-stage bookends, then the implied message is that behind the accomplished politician is a sheepishly smirking, infantilized simian. Between these two covers lie some of the book's more egregiously demeaning images, all with a lurking simian presence: Obama as a young boy, living in Indonesia and being taught by monkeys; Obama as a cigarette-smoking, basketball-playing, liquor-drinking, African American hood in hip-hop clothing (although his oversized T-shirt says "Hawaii"); Obama as a young man visiting his African grandmother, surrounded by animals and Obama skateboarding into the White House. The depictions of the relationship between Barack Obama and wife Michelle Obama are particularly arresting, with Barack cowering before a dominatrix Michelle and otherwise entirely infantilized in her presence. Michelle, by the way, is not depicted with particularly African American features. This book, in combination with other racialized depictions—the cell phone television advertisement, Mr. Notchi, even "Black Boss,"—show ways in which the slippage into *soto* racism is always simmering just below the surface.

There is also another alternative Japanese attitude toward blacks—that of forging alliances between persons of color and whites—as the Meiji leaders initially sought to do, and as subcultural youths have done through rap and reggae.<sup>30</sup> As Marc Gallicchio notes, Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 signaled the possibilities of exactly this kind of racialized alliance through which Japan would become the "champion of the darker races."<sup>31</sup> Here is another example of the "dualistic racial identity" we have mentioned earlier, requiring the rejection of white hegemony and its racial hierarchy.<sup>32</sup> If Japan joins forces in subverting white hegemony, it turns its back upon near-white status and asserts the right to a "colored" position. To a certain extent, this was Japan's rationale during the Pacific War when it anointed itself the regional and racialized leader and creating colonies throughout Asia and the Pacific while defending a "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere." By doing so, Japan positioned itself as the champion of people of color *vis-à-vis* Euroamerica. However,

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<sup>30</sup> Russell, 1996: 27.

<sup>31</sup> Gallicchio, 2000: 7–8.

<sup>32</sup> Koshiro, 2003: 186.

if Japan accepts the white-dominant hierarchy, it takes advantage of a “near-white” status.

*Japan and “Post-Racial” Possibilities?*

Where do these Japanese positionings leave us in discussing racialization and Obama? In many ways, the Japanese might be surprised by the interpretation, particularly by non-Japanese, of some of its Obama expressions as being offensive. Many within Japan take race and racism as a Western construct—and a particularly American problem—imposed as a form of *gaiatsu* [external, foreign pressure], outside coercion that looks and feels like American cultural imperialism. These defenders of Japan tend to ignore the ways in which race and racism created the ideological underpinnings of practices surrounding the Japanese treatment of some of its own racialized minorities, namely the Ainu and Okinawans.<sup>33</sup> Race and racism have thus been alive and well in modern Japan, not necessarily as a cultural imposition from the outside, but as an assumption of practices, hierarchies, and justifications.

Furthermore, it is not as if racialized practices—including that surrounding Obama—are not criticized in Japan, but it is true that outsiders’ voices carry particular weight in a country still looking over its shoulder to see where its stands in terms of global geopolitics and prestige. *Gaiatsu*, in other words, is a force, felt and even resented by many. In the late 1980s, many Japanese were surprised when outsiders criticized toy manufacturer Takara’s adoption of *dakko-chan* dolls as the company logo. *Dakko-chan* dolls are inflatable toys stereotypically portraying simian-like Africans, and designed to cling onto one’s arm which were wildly popular in the 1960s, and still sold widely. They were surprised in 2001, when foreign observers protested the display of caricatured black mannequins with grotesquely large lips and Little Black Sambo dolls in a Japanese department store.<sup>34</sup> Hirata Itsuko, author of the book described above, calls herself “a fan of the President.” In a response to my email inquiries, she writes: “I am a fan of the President because he has great talent, not only for philosophy and the politics, but also for dancing and music.”<sup>35</sup> She positions Obama as a healer with “miracle words,” even as she places

<sup>33</sup> Siddle, 1996.

<sup>34</sup> Greenwald, 2001.

<sup>35</sup> Hirata, 2009. Personal communication, 11 November.



him within African American stereotypes, when she mentions his affinity for “dance and music.” In response to my query about the illustrations, Ms. Hirata offers little explanation except, “[Kiju] is quite famous illustrator and this is his style.”<sup>36</sup>

Many living in Japan were surprised by the foreign reaction to the monkey-Obama cell phone advertisement in 2008. This includes not only Japanese, but even some African Americans living in Japan. Malcolm Adams, a former CBS correspondent in Japan, an original member of CNN Tokyo, and a resident of Japan for over thirty years, was asked to lead the protest against the advertisement because of his media background and his reputation as a leading figure in the African American community in Japan (he is a founding member and former president of the Japan African American Friendship Association). In a June 5, 2010 interview, Adams takes a more sympathetic position than one might expect, calling the E-Mobile incident a mere “cross cultural *faux pas*.” Here is his explanation of the advertisement and subsequent protest, quoted at length to give a better sense of the events that took place and the man telling the story:

That was at the time when the Obamamania took over the globe—his popularity, his attractiveness to all various sorts of people . . . and of course it caught on here in Japan, and Japan being the marketing nation that it is, the business nation that it is, [the] E-Mobile company, which is a cell-phone provider, decided to take advantage of this popularity and use it in a commercial to promote its new cell-phone product. The problem with it was that their mannequin [i.e., their signature character] and their marketing icon was a monkey, which in Japan is something that’s very cute; he’s respected for his intelligence. If you go to temples around Japan you see the monkey image, [and] “See no evil, Hear no evil, Speak no evil” images on temples that date back hundreds of years in Japan, so the monkey has a history and a place in Japan’s mind and heart which is positive. The problem with their portrayal of Obama as this monkey person resulted in a cross-cultural faux pas.

What we learned was that although this is an island nation and heretofore much of what went on in Japan stayed in Japan, that is no longer the case, as with the advent of the Internet, which makes the globe very small, so much so that the discourse in Japan is no longer kept to Japan. So an African American published and created an Internet blog called Black Tokyo.com, [publicized] this issue and generated some responses. It became known to those of us who live here, and then I was contacted as someone who has played a leadership role in terms of African American affairs, insofar as they relate to the Japanese lifestyle and culture here, to see if we

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<sup>36</sup> Hirata, 2009. Personal communication, 11 November.

can do something to publicize this issue and maybe get it corrected. That was one of several online entities that publicized this issue. Some of the information through the Internet came back to us from the United States as well. So it was dispersed, but I got calls from within Japan, from African American residents here, and then I immediately contacted the president, the authorities of the company, and described to them that this was an offensive cultural faux pas, and they would do well to correct it or remove it, because our intention was to publicize it and demonstrate our protest against it, as something that is culturally offensive and probably racist, or at least a cross-cultural faux pas that was rooted in the legacy of negative caricatures of African Americans that we had experienced over the years in Japan... in the United States, and now has manifested itself here, probably as a misunderstanding....

So when I saw the video, I said, "Uh-huh. This is not good." This is my initial reaction, and my second reaction as I continued to analyze it as a journalist would is to say, "Well, why could this happen?" And what I came up with... well, it could happen because of lack of our awareness and understanding about the cultural insensitivity that it represented in the eyes of resident foreign Americans in general and African Americans in specific. I say that because it was beyond just being black in Japan. It was about being an American in Japan because this guy was the potential next leader of the United States and in the midst of that euphoria about him, right? Then, my third analysis went to, "Well, there is a business reason for it." And what is the business reason? This guy's [Obama] generating all kinds of interest around the world and to tie this icon [i.e., monkey] that represents the company prior to the Obama campaign [would be good for business]... It [the monkey] didn't just come up. The monkey had been their mannequin, so to speak.

So I sent an email to the company president and told him of the situation, the reason why I'm calling is because I'm getting calls and there are people concerned about the negative portrayal of their beloved candidate Obamasan, using this monkey, and in the cultural context in America, there is a racist history of using caricatures about black people and anybody who's aware globally, internationally is aware that this would be an unwise thing to do. So we were wondering... if you had the knowledge, first of all, if you were aware of it, then would you allow that to happen? If you weren't aware of it, you need to be aware of it, and you'd be advised to get it off, because it could be a disservice to your company image, if it continues to go viral on the Internet as it's been doing.

In short, Adams takes a generally sympathetic view of the advertisement, even if he was ultimately placed in a position of asking the company to withdraw it. He also positioned himself as a facilitator rather than an activist, whose goal was to help E-Mobile through education. He assumed that this "cultural misunderstanding" was simply that—an oversight that needed explanation and thereby education, not a deliberate act of

malevolence on the part of the company. In the end, E-Mobile withdrew the advertisement and the issue was dropped, but not without a fair amount of negative publicity about Japan's racism, especially on the Internet.<sup>37</sup> Adams is not alone in taking this relatively benign position that sidesteps militancy in favor of "cultural bridging" (Adams' terms). When I presented a talk on this subject in Tokyo at the Deutsches Institut for Japanstudien, the one African American living in Japan who attended the talk echoed Adams' point of view, and in fact defended E-Mobile.<sup>38</sup>

There are two issues at stake here. The first is this and other potentially racially-linked, simian representations of Obama—including enthusiastically supportive ones. The second is the reactions of at least some African Americans resident in Japan. The most common refrain heard from Japanese defenders is that these representations have no racist intent, that they are merely entertainment and not meant to debase anyone.<sup>39</sup> In fact, some Japanese criticize Americans for their inherently racist attitudes in interpreting the cell phone Obama monkey advertisement negatively. Citing America's history of racism and slavery, they seem to ask "who is the real racist?" In contrast, they say, the commercial was only meant as light-hearted humor. The problem with this counter-critique is that it fails to acknowledge racism as a process of stereotyping on the basis of race whether done maliciously, admiringly, or humorously. Indeed, slander, praise, and jokes can be equally virulent forms of racialized practices especially when shaded by ambiguity.

Japanese claim naïveté and a lack of experience when it comes to race relations, and particularly insofar as these relate to African Americans.<sup>40</sup> Falling back upon the homogeneity myth (and ignoring its own

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<sup>37</sup> It is worthwhile noting that another cell phone company, SoftBank, aired a bizarre series of commercials in 2009 and 2010 that involves a family consisting of a Japanese mother, a white dog father, a Japanese daughter, and an African American man as brother (e.g. "Softbank Commercial, Featuring Black Guy," *YouTube*, 2010; "Softbank Dog—What's Funny?—English Subtitles," *YouTube*, 2010; "Softbank Dog—What's Funny?—English Subtitles," *YouTube*, 2010). In one SoftBank commercial, the Japanese mother tells her African American son that he looks like Obama, and suggests that he jokingly hold a banana to his ear in imitation of a cell phone. He does so, and then is immediately told that he actually does not resemble the American President ("Softbank Banana Obama Commercial," *YouTube*, 2010). To my knowledge, African Americans in Japan have not lodged formal protests against this series of advertisements, perhaps because the entire premise is so bizarre.

<sup>38</sup> "Post-racial Obama in Japan? Struggles of Blood Ideology Amid Calls for Change," *DJ Forum*, 10 June 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Creighton, 1997: 223.

<sup>40</sup> Creighton, 1997: 223. The history of African Americans in Japan is sparse. According to Yukiko Koshiro, that history has been "muted" because reinforcing the positive role of African Americans in Japan has proved a menace to U.S.-Japan relations (Koshiro, 2003: 184).

multiethnic population that includes Ainu, Okinawans, Koreans, Chinese, Filipinos, and others), they claim this naïveté on the grounds of being a population in which race is officially not an issue.<sup>41</sup> They claim mono-raciality as not only a social condition, but also a virtue. Armed with an *uchi-soto* politico-cultural logic, Japanese responsibility and expectation of knowing only falls within the *uchi* purview. Others—those considered *soto*—may easily fall prey to any number of images, stereotypes, and representations with little critique or domestic repercussion. Clearly, power works to blunt scrutiny. The problem with this position is that it assumes Japan to retain a *shimaguni* [island country] isolation, as if no one else might be looking over their shoulder, or that these *soto* others might not have a voice in their own representation. In reality, the world, even within Japan, is far too complex and intermixed to claim *shimaguni* status. Like Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro's racist remarks of 1986, or the Little Black Sambo dolls of 2001, the E-Mobile advertisement becomes part of the legacy of Japan's racialism before a global audience.<sup>42</sup> This legacy paints Japan as always and ever racist, founded in blood ideology, purity-pollution divides, and a fascistic streak. However, this legacy also points to a continuing history of ideas of race borrowed from Western powers and indigenized as Japan's own. Racialization, as a process of affirming *soto* otherness, and as based in blood ideology invites the simian presence as it permeates at least some representations of Barack Obama in Japan.

The second issue is one that will take far more ethnographic research to untangle. It is one thing to discuss attitudes toward Africans and African Americans in Japan—in other words, the focus of this chapter. It is another to discuss the reactions of blacks long resident in Japan. The stories of those residents are individuated and complex, but each has found his or her own means of weighing the costs and benefits of living in Japan. Indeed, many have formed networks with each other through online websites and organizations such as Black Tokyo, Black Professionals in Tokyo, and the Japan African American Friendship Association.<sup>43</sup> According to some long-time African American residents, Japan's racism is no worse than that of the United States, and in fact the country affords blacks greater opportunities because of the relatively high status of America in Japan.

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<sup>41</sup> Greenwald, 2001.

<sup>42</sup> For Nakasone's 1986 comment on Japanese-American racial differences, see Bowen, 2001.

<sup>43</sup> For Black Tokyo, see "Black Tokyo," 2010. For Black Professionals in Tokyo, see "Black Professionals in Tokyo," 2010.

This raises the possibility of African Americans (like other Americans) becoming mini-celebrities in Japan in ways that would not be available to them in the United States.<sup>44</sup> In this context, Japanese racist attitudes towards African Americans find a complexly desirable home among many resident blacks, who accept these “cultural *faux pas*” as small price to pay for a relatively comfortable, safe, and rewarding expatriate life.

### *Simian Intimacy*

The media story, however, is even more complex. Let us examine the monkey itself as a figure in Japanese culture, aside from any racial overtones. As Adams mentions, another aspect of the defense of simian projections of Obama is the honored place of monkeys—specifically the Japanese macaque—in Japan. During the early periods of Japanese history, the monkey was viewed reverentially as a mediator between animals and humans. As Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney explains, monkeys have been used as metaphors for the Japanese in fundamental ways: as social creatures exhibiting cooperation for survival, a joint ownership of resources and possessing souls and personalities.<sup>45</sup> They are seen to have emotions, sociability, and the capacity for empathy. They imitate and perform as comfortable entertainers on stage. In one television program I watched in the 1990s, a monkey trainer was forced to retire an older monkey because of his increasing failure to perform well. The owner decided to do this in much the same way as one might handle a human employee: he took the old monkey aside, sat him down, poured him a glass of *sake*, and commiserated the plight of failing abilities. The scene ended with trainer and monkey presumably understanding one another implicitly without the need for words and walking together side by side into the distance. The ambiguity of human-monkey divides lies in the fact that monkeys share abilities that are considered a valuable part of Japanese society: they communicate, but do so nonverbally; they form affectionate bonds, yet make few demands and they are the ideal companion for many Japanese because of their silent co-presence.<sup>46</sup> In the cell phone advertisement, they even shed tears.

And yet, the Japanese clearly understand that monkeys are not humans and vice versa. Apart from those in the wild, every monkey has an owner/

<sup>44</sup> Adams, 2010. Personal communication, 5 June.

<sup>45</sup> Ohnuki-Tierney, 1987: 25.

<sup>46</sup> Lebra, 1987.

trainer. In fact, it is the human-monkey interaction as faux equals, as simultaneously proximate yet distinct, that becomes part of the public's fascination. As Ohnuki-Tierney explains, "Japanese are aware of the simultaneous proximity and distance between themselves and the monkey. When they allow proximity, they view the monkey as a deity that is close enough to humans to be a mediator. When they are threatened and wish to keep the monkey at a distance, they regard the animal negatively, as a scapegoat."<sup>47</sup> And yet, a third option exists: monkey as spectacle, as an object of an occasional uneasy laughter that challenges the basic assumptions of what it means to be human and Japanese. This is monkey as uncanny, as familiar yet foreign, as prompting a jolt of surprise (including fascination, revulsion, humor) within what has been dubbed an "uncanny valley" of response to a nonhuman that veers eerily close to near-human mimicry.<sup>48</sup> This is the place of Yat-chan and Fuku-chan, two trained monkeys who work in the Kayabukiya tavern, north of Tokyo, serving customers beer and snacks and even dancing.<sup>49</sup> In Japanese media coverage of these monkey waiters, the most frequently used adjective to describe them is *kawaii* [cute], and even *chō-kawaii* [super cute].

In fact, we may look to the concept of *kawaii* to begin to understand at least one aspect of Japanese racialism and Obama's place within it. Obama depicted as a monkey miniaturizes him and makes him endearing. This is the entertainment argument rephrased. (If Obama is a monkey, one might ask, then who is his trainer/owner?) *Kawaii* links not only to the cute, but also to the pitiable [*kawaisō*]. The list of what is considered *kawaii* ranges from babies, puppies, and Hello Kitty to smiling benign centenarians. What these share is the elicitation of affect based on their neediness.<sup>50</sup> Here is where race plays a measurable card. Whereas African Americans may invoke fear or danger, they may be rendered *kawaii* if depicted as infantile, hapless, and vulnerable. Indeed, size matters here for reinforcing the cuteness of the object. This is the simian displacement drawn in Hirata's book by which Obama is made into a small, *kawaii* monkey.

What becomes a monkey most? Nothing less than a coat, a tie, and cheering crowds by which he may mimic those in power, followed by a tear to affirm just how near-human he is. It is the sense of mimicry, of out-of-placedness, of the racialized border zone that defines the simian

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<sup>47</sup> Ohnuki-Tierney, 1987: 37.

<sup>48</sup> Mori, 1970.

<sup>49</sup> "Monkey Waiters." *YouTube*, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Merish, 1996: 187.

presence of Japan's Obama. He may be "good looking, tall, and cool," as described earlier, but as one observer told me, "[Japanese] love his ears." And why? Because it makes his simian vulnerability complete, especially as seen from behind.

The monkey allows other possibilities too. People in Japan may feel a greater sense of affinity and intimacy with a monkey than with a supremely accomplished person. A monkey represents the underdog with whom the Japanese publicly identify. This is Japan as victim, not as victor.<sup>51</sup> For some Japanese, a monkey aligns Obama with a minority status—whether as African American or as mixed. Obama's minority positioning allows the Japanese to potentially relate to him more easily than if he was white; they relate to him as another person of color in a white-dominant world. This proves to be a tenuous ground for the Japanese: belonging to an alliance of coloreds suggests relinquishing one's earned status as "honorary white." Here, once again, is the Japanese "dualistic racial identity" dilemma.

The cute factor works here as well, pulling the American President down to the level of the (Japanese) people and placing him within a frame of knowability that surpasses racial and even species divides. To admire and respect a leader is one thing, but to cherish a person through the *kawaii* frame suggests affective bonds. Here is how one Japanese fan from Obama-shi I interviewed describes his relationship with President Obama:

In all of Japan, I'm probably the only one wearing this [Obama shirt] all day. I have it on all the time, all day. I'm like this all the time, whether I'm in Tokyo or Nagoya. All the time.... Come to think of it, isn't he the first American president to whom Japanese people refer with "-san"? Did we say Kennedy-san or Bush-san? We didn't, right? So only Obama-san is called Obama-san. I think Japanese people find it easy to relate to him, not that he lacks dignity, but he just has that special quality about him.... He's easy to relate to.<sup>52</sup>

"Easy to relate to" becomes the key to a personal relationship that acknowledges the pedestal of the position, while asserting the approachability of the man. The word this Japanese fan and others often use to describe the feeling they have towards Obama is *shitashimi* [intimacy]. It is this ability to proffer intimacy through the common touch—as a racialized minority and even as a monkey—that is the draw. In a social world in which ties are all-important, ascribing intimacy to a relationship with a world

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<sup>51</sup> Orr, 2001.

<sup>52</sup> Fujiwara, 2009. Personal communication. 6 November.



leader is no small feat. This intimacy transcends position, nation, race, and species.

In her ethnohistorical study of monkeys and performance in Japanese culture, Ohnuki-Tierney suggests that the monkey's proximity to a human-animal boundary, whether as mediator, scapegoat, or clown, makes it a reflexive mirror upon humans, and thus upon the Japanese.<sup>53</sup> This is a mirror that does more than reflect; it comments and critiques from the position of one who straddles inner [*uchi*] and outer [*soto*] worlds, human and animal divides, this world and the spirit world. If monkey may be seen as mirror in Japan, as Ohnuki-Tierney contends, then perhaps the uncanny accomplishment of the Obama-as-monkey image is that he becomes an intimate through a simian simulacrum. This is a racialized version of the "uncanny valley"—a monkey/black who can perform superbly as a human/Japanese. In short, he becomes quasi-"Japanese." Like the action figure doll described earlier, Obama's constructed versatility suggests the possibility that he may transcend his own racialization to enact the global, pan-racial, post-racial superhero monkey.

This monkey plays multiply and ironically—that is, simultaneously lowly animal and powerful President, cute infantilized presence and caring parental figure, teenage skateboarder and adult politician. Obama's image, too, is complex—multiracial and African American, growing up in the margins of American society (born in Hawaii, overseas childhood in Indonesia) and inhabiting the centers of elite global institutions. Obama as monkey is not the only image of the President in Japan, but it is one that combines racialization within a domestic narrative that draws upon affective bonds. If this is the tie that binds, then it does so on its own nationalistic terms, combining commodity fetishism, celebrity culture, and intimacy with blood ideology. Indeed, Obama's "cool" quotient in Japan rocks even amid these simian undertones, extending *kawaii* as readily from the podium as from the marketplace.

### *Concluding Thoughts on Race*

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze one example of racialization and its complexities using Japanese Obamamania as a case study. However, it is worthwhile to step back and take a broader look at some of

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<sup>53</sup> Ohnuki-Tierney, 1987.

the implications of this study. In what ways might we extend the analysis beyond Obamamania to issues of race in contemporary Japan?

Despite signing the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 1995, Japan has yet to enact any official laws guaranteeing its application.<sup>54</sup> Thus, practices of racial discrimination pepper daily life in Japan and are not seen as abnormal, with little legal recourse but to look the other way. Furthermore, the 2010 Japanese national census provides a useful lens with which to view the broader issues of race in contemporary Japan. Although the government document has made various accommodations to a multicultural population, such as offering the census in 27 different languages explained on a multilingual website, it does not acknowledge diversity within its shores except by nationality. Thus, the census foregrounds nationality—Japanese versus “miscellaneous” (non-Japanese resident for three months or longer)—but not ethnicity or race.<sup>55</sup> Some may say that this indicates a “post-racial” attitude in which something called “race” is not a relevant factor. Others may say that this indicates a government unwilling to fully embrace a population that is increasingly multicultural and incipiently multiracial.

Race, in fact, remains the basis of numerous discriminatory policies and practices, from apartment rentals to bathhouse bans to clubs with “Japanese only” signs. These preclude suggesting Japan as a “post-racial” society. They suggest an implicitly racialized society in which the overwhelming majority claims monoracial affiliation. Here lies the much touted “homogeneous Japan.” However, here also lies the means by which that tout might be effected—particularly through practices such as the national census and “Japanese only” policies. The normativity of such practices shape people’s perceptions of what constitutes “Japan” and how race inheres within that constitutive force. With government officials, such as Minister for Foreign Affairs (from 2005 to 2007; Prime Minister from 2008 to 2009) Aso Tarō declaring Japan as “one nation, one civilization, one language, one culture, and one race,” the strength of the repeated “one”-note rings loudly and clearly. This stridently monocular view of Japan encompasses race as a strongly hegemonic presence.

In this way, race acts as a critical boundary of inclusion, thereby erasing those that fall outside its membership. The lessons of the Obamamania analysis lie within these boundaries. Bolstered by fundamental concepts

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<sup>54</sup> Arudou, 2010a.

<sup>55</sup> Arudou, 2010b.

of blood ideology and *soto-uchi* divides, racialized precepts do not stop there. Instead, they hinge upon particularistic historical conditions that give definition to the specifics of race: who these people are (blacks in this case) and how they are situated within a spectrum that places Japan in the world (e.g. stereotypes, global hierarchies, subcultural cachet). Racialized precepts are also inflected by other sociological factors, such as gender, social class, phenotypes (e.g., color of skin, height, shape of body, perceived attractiveness), Japanese linguistic ability and cultural knowledge and age, such that any one or a combination of these other factors may affect the perception of individuals in Japanese society. I am not suggesting that race is ever supplanted or “overcome” in Japan, but that these other mitigating factors may shape an individual’s experience of a racialized identity.

Finally, the racialized lessons of Obamamania in Japan intersect with those of celebrity and global power. How could the Japanese public accept a monkey as a stand in for a President, even in jest? How do African Americans in Japan see the entertainment value of such a juxtaposition? Do we relegate race, racialization, and racism to the closet in Japan as a particular American sensitivity or issue, replete with accusations of *gaiatsu*-style cultural imperialism? Do the Japanese inherently care about race? It seems that many Japanese do seem to care about race when invoked as part of a “foreigner problem” linked to rising rates of crime. They seem to care very much when mixed-race individuals grab the limelight (e.g. Miyazawa Rie, Japanese-Dutch model and actress; Yu Darvish, Japanese-Iranian baseball star; Jerome White, a.k.a. “Jero,” African-American-Japanese singing star). For these celebrities, race is always part of a branded image. So, too, with Obama, whose blackness (or mixed-race ancestry) may simultaneously prove how far he has come, imbue his image with a “cool” quotient, or provide fodder for those who choose to infantilize him. In short, race serves multiple masters in complex ways—in Japan as elsewhere.

On the one hand, race can act as a scapegoat, establishing a boundary of national membership (and foreign exclusion), as in Aso’s quote. On the other hand, race can shine a spotlight upon celebrity when spun positively—that is, when racialization adds value to the brand. These are some of the categorical confusions of race in Japan, embracing the media “spin” (that is, the stories that people tell, whether of dangerous foreigners or mixed-race celebrities), as well as holding a sense of inevitability resting in blood ideology. In fact, Obamamania engenders its own set of categorical confusions, set in motion around race. These confusions provide valuable insights concerning the malleability of racializations in Japan,

where one person's monkey may be another's scapegoat, and where "cool" may circulate as part of a fevered political campaign as well as a blueprint for looking the other way in everyday injustices. With the global fervor of 2008 and 2009 well behind us, it remains to be seen where the rumblings of race surrounding Barack Obama in Japan will proceed. National calls for change and the promise inspired by Obama fizzled dramatically in Japan as the Prime Ministership of Hatoyama Yukio lasted for less than a year, quickly giving way to successor Kan Naoto's in June 2010 (perhaps not so surprising, given that there have been five different Prime Ministers in as many years since 2006). Ideologies of race may not be quite as fickle as changing heads of state, but categorical confusion evidenced by Japan's fevered embrace of Barack Obama suggests competing paradigms, contingencies of exceptionalism, and fissures in the practices of everyday life.

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