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'LIGHTER THAN YELLOW, BUT NOT ENOUGH': WESTERN DISCOURSE ON THE JAPANESE 'RACE', 1854–1904*

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ABSTRACT. *During the half century (1854–1904) which followed the opening of Japan's ports, Westerners scrutinized the rediscovered archipelago and attempted to classify its inhabitants within their racial system. Despite the claim for 'scientific' objectivism, Western racial views of the Japanese were largely dictated by contemporary political and moral attitudes toward Japan. Hence, writings on the Japanese 'race' reflected not only the racial knowledge of the period but also the asymmetry between the West and Japan. These writings embodied a genuine discourse: they were propounded in texts, historically located, and displayed a coherent system of meaning. Critically, the Western discourse regarding the identity of the Japanese people aimed to maintain, and even produce, power relations between the colonial powers and the local population, and as such it exerted ideological influence on both Western readers and the Japanese. The present article traces this racial discourse, and attempts to explain the rapid transformation of the image of the Japanese people from an almost unknown racial entity to a national group Westerners perceived as a major racial threat.*

The twentieth century has witnessed the culmination of the concept of race as one of the fundamental determinants of social and international relations. The dark side of this concept is racism, namely the expression of the superiority of one race's cultural heritage over that of another race. Racism depends on the existence of clear categories as well as a system of classification, and much research has been carried out on its lengthy development in Europe and North America. Racism, it is argued here, may develop in a relatively short period and without much contact with its target group. One such an example is the fervent racist hatred the Allies, and particularly Americans, felt toward the Japanese people during the Pacific War.[1] Incredibly, only a century earlier Westerners had had only a vague idea concerning secluded Japan and the racial constitution of its people. The opening of Japan had ended the obscurity, and within the next half century, Westerners endeavoured to establish the racial standing of the Japanese and simultaneously transformed their attitudes

* I thank Harumi Befu, Peter Duus, Charles Hayford, Eyal Ben-Ari, Mukund Subramanian, and several anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier drafts.

[1] For accounts on the racial attitudes of the Allied forces toward Japan, see Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a kind: The United States, Britain, and the war against Japan, 1941–1945* (Oxford, 1978); Christopher Thorne, 'Racial aspects of the Far Eastern War of 1941–1945', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 66 (1980), pp. 329–77; John Dower, *War without mercy: race and power in the Pacific War* (New York, 1986); John Dower, *Japan in war and peace: selected essays* (New York, 1993).

toward that nation. Despite its intensity, this transformation lacked some of the complexities of other racial discourses, and thus it elucidates in a simple but straightforward manner the intricate interrelations between the rise of the concept of race, geopolitical circumstances, and development of racism toward a specific group.

In the first few decades after the American squadron under the command of Commodore Perry ended two centuries of Japanese self-seclusion, the West was faced with a bulk of novel information about the rediscovered archipelago and its people. For many of the new explorers, encountering Japan was a pleasant experience. They felt as if they were in a 'toyland' country, inhabited by artistic people, and decorated with beautiful, easily accessible women. For others, however, the encounter led to a disturbing experience. The Japanese seemed to defy, some felt, a part of the unwritten 'rules' of the colonial encounter: they were neither submissive nor uncivilized, and often not at all 'inferior'. Moreover, the Japanese proudly 'resisted' foreign labels, and were constantly on the move to shape their own national destiny. This was a novel experience for the people of the Occident, who at the heyday of their imperialist expansion viewed the world with tremendous supremacy. For this reason, questions regarding the racial identity of the inhabitants of Japan became the core issue of an intensive discourse: Who are they? What is their place in the racial hierarchy? How should they be treated?

Japan's impressive pavilion in Philadelphia, at the International Exhibition of 1876, was one of the great 'surprises' of the fair. 'We have been accustomed,' wrote James McCabe, one of the narrators of the event, 'to regard that country as uncivilized, or half-civilized at the best, but we found here abundant evidence that it outshines the most cultivated nations of Europe in arts which are their pride and glory, and which are regarded as among the proudest tokens of their high civilization.'[2]

Three decades later, Japan was still seen as an anomaly, a nation treated as if it were a retarded child who unexpectedly passed a college examination. George Knox, a British writer and long resident in Japan, summed up succinctly the 'problem' with Japan at the end of 1904, a time when its astounding victory over Tsarist Russia seemed certain. Knox admitted:

> In our superficial way we [again, 'we': Westerners, the civilized people] have classed Asiatics together and we have assumed our own superiority. It has seemed a fact, proved by centuries of intercourse and generations of conquest, that the East lacks the power of organisation, the attention to details, and of master over complicated machinery. Japan upsets our deductions by showing its equality in these matters, and, on the final appeal, by putting itself into the first rank of nations … Here is a people, undoubtedly Asiatic, which shows that it can master the science and the methods of the West[3]

[2] James McCabe, *The illustrated history of the Centennial Exhibition* (Philadelphia, 1876). Cited by Neil Harris, 'All the world a melting pot? Japan at American fairs, 1876–1904', in Akira Iriye, ed., *Mutual images: essays in American–Japanese relations* (Cambridge, MA, 1975), p. 30.

[3] George William Knox, *Imperial Japan: the country and its people* (New York, 1904), pp. 7–8.

In this article I seek to show that Western writings on the Japanese race reflected not only the racial knowledge of the period but also the power relations between the West and the local population. Western attempts to classify racially the Japanese were largely dictated by their attitudes toward them. And these attitudes, which were affected by Japan's status vis-à-vis the West, determined whether physical features, that were supposed to distinguish the Japanese from other non-European ethnic groups, would be illuminated or suppressed. Likewise, these attitudes affected Westerners' perception, since classifications of the Japanese within the racial hierarchy affected the way they were perceived and depicted.

In constructing a representational system for the Other, as Sander Gilman points out, 'we search for anatomical signs of difference such as physiognomy and skin color'.[4] Here I seek to show that such representations are dependent on the attitude toward the Other as well as the system of categories available. Thus, as long as the Japanese were perceived as culturally developed yet unthreatening politically, they were depicted in vague racial terms. Once, however, they have started to gain military power and push forward their own political agenda, they were given a clearly defined inferior racial character and were marked as the menacing Other. Admittedly, this transformation occurred in parallel with and was affected by contemporary intellectual evolution in the West: the rise of anthropological theory and the construction of a racial worldview. Yet often, earlier representations unrelated to that evolution lingered due to political motives and despite the rise of new racial categories.

The racial writings on the Japanese during this period embodied, I argue, a genuine 'discourse'. They were propounded in texts, historically located, displayed a coherent system of meaning, and often referred to other racial discourses.[5] These writings aimed to maintain, and even to produce, power relations between the colonial powers and the local population. And, critically, they exerted ideological influence not only on Western readers, as seen in their writings, public opinion, representations in popular culture, and attitudes toward Japan in later years, but also on the Japanese self-image and attitudes toward the West.[6]

[4] Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and pathology: stereotypes of sexuality, race, and madness* (Ithacha and London, 1985), p. 25.

[5] On the definition of discourse, see Ian Parker, *Discourse dynamics: critical analysis for social and individual psychology* (London, 1992), pp. 6–20.

[6] For the effect of Western racial ideology and colonial policies on the Japanese, see Michio Kitahara, 'The Western impact on Japanese racial self-image', *Journal of Developing Societies*, 3 (1986), pp. 184–9; for more indirect repercussions, see Michael Weiner, *Race and migration in imperial Japan* (London, 1994), ch. 1; Michael Weiner, 'Discourses of race, nation and empire in pre-1945 Japan', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 18 (1995), pp. 433–56.

I

An intricate relationship between the status and power of a group and racial attitudes toward its members was omnipresent in Western contacts with other peoples. As for the Japanese, in fact, these relations were an extension of the way European writers portrayed Japanese appearance ever since Garcia de Escalante Alvardo compiled the first report from the archipelago in 1548. Having no technological advantage over the Japanese, European visitors in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries perceived only few physical differences between themselves and the local population. These visitors, it should be mentioned, were oblivious to racial questions, and thus they were rarely preoccupied with questions concerning the racial origins of the Japanese. Nevertheless, with the formation of a racial worldview in Europe, scholars and lay writers began to pay growing attention to physical differences and depict the Japanese as different from themselves.[7]

Nothing can epitomize this trend more than a colour transformation that took place in Western perceptions of the Japanese: within a period of three centuries, they turned from spotless 'whites' to quintessential 'yellows'. These early European impressions are relevant to late nineteenth-century discourse because there has been an unmistakable continuum between the writings of early visitors to Japan and those who ventured there in the following centuries: often a great similarity in their conceptions. In certain aspects, however, the early accounts differ greatly from the later ones with regard to race issues, and thus they demonstrate that race is a cultural construct.

The forced opening of Japan in 1853–4 enabled Westerners to conduct the first thorough scrutiny of the Japanese in more than two centuries. Recognizing the historical and scientific value of his voyage, Commodore Perry brought along several scholars and curators. From an anthropological viewpoint, at least, their findings were not of much value. The Americans were taken aback by the practice of tooth blackening among married women, but were impressed by the towering physique of Sumo wrestlers, whom Perry described as 'huge men, naked with the exception of a narrow girdle around the loins'.[8] Dr James Morrow, who joined Perry's second expedition, found Japanese interpreters who came aboard his ship to be intelligent and gentlemanly men, yet 'they are effeminate and run about and act more like delicate females than men'.[9]

Apart from these haphazard portrayals of the Japanese, the Americans did not mention, in fact, racial matters: they neither discussed the Japanese origins,

[7] For earlier racial perspectives on Japan, see Rotem Kowner, 'The skin as a metaphor: early European racial perspectives on Japan, 1548–1853' (forthcoming).

[8] Matthew Calbraith Perry, *The Japan expedition 1852–1854: the personal journal of commodore Matthew C. Perry*, ed. Roger Pineau (Washington, 1968), p. 190.

[9] James Morrow, *A scientist with Perry in Japan: the journal of Dr. James Morrow* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1947), pp. 122–3; for similar impressions, see Matthew Calbraith Perry and Francis L. Hawk, *Narrative of the expedition of an American squadron to the China Seas and Japan under the command of commodore M. C. Perry, U.S.N.* (New York, 1952), p. 77.

nor compared them with other peoples. Newcomers from Britain returned with similar accounts. Lawrence Oliphant, who joined Lord Elgin's mission to China and Japan in 1857–9, had similar impressions to those of Perry. He noted the 'ghastly' appearance of the Japanese women, but refrained from raising any racial questions.[10] It is more than likely that all these 'pioneers' considered the Japanese as Asians and did not deem there to be much to elaborate upon. One exception was William Heine, a German illustrator who joined Perry's expedition as a collector and curator of natural history. Heine was impressed by the decent and polite officials among whom 'only a hint of the Asiatic countenance touched the[ir] features'. This countenance, he added, did not 'assert itself disagreeably even in the faces of lower-class people'.[11]

By 1860, writers of popular anthologies on Japan reiterated much of Engelbert Kaempfer's classic narrative from the early eighteenth century, updated with some racial classifications of the period.[12] The Englishman S. Kemish, who like many of his contemporaries had never been to the country, defined the Japanese as members of the Mongol–Tartar race. Kemish portrayed the Japanese as 'short in stature, stout in appearance, well-made, strong, active, free and easy in their motions', and as having 'a yellowish-brown complexion … large heads, broad skulls, high cheek bones, rather thick and short nose, thick eye-lids, face generally oval'.[13]

In the same year, the historian Richard Hildreth completed the first American anthology on Japan. Hildreth stated that the island 'is inhabited by a race that, at first sight, greatly resemble the Chinese in form and exterior. In carefully examining their characteristic features, however, and comparing them with those of the Chinese, it is easy to perceive the discrimination between them.' In a manner similar to the writings by the Swedish naturalist Charles Thunberg and the German physician Philipp Franz von Siebold during the latter half of the Tokugawa Era (1600–1868), Hilderth paid close attention to the unique features of the Japanese eye:

> Although placed almost as obliquely as that of the Chinese, is, however, wider near the nose, and the centre of the eyelid appears drawn up when opened. The hair of the Japanese is not uniformly black, but of a deep brown hue. In children below the age of twelve it may be found of all shades, even to flaxen.[14]

[10] Lawrence Oliphant, *Narrative of the earl of Elgin's mission to China and Japan in the years 1857, '58, '59* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1859), I, p. 113.

[11] William Heine, *With Perry to Japan: a memoir by William Heine* (Honolulu, 1990), p. 65.

[12] Engelbert Kaempfer, *The history of Japan: giving an account of the ancient and present state and government of that empire* (London, 1727).

[13] S. B. Kemish, *The Japanese empire: its physical, political, and social condition and history, with details of the late American and British expeditions* (London, 1860), p. 135. For Kemish's reliance on Kaempfer, see pp. 246–7.

[14] Richard Hildreth, *Japan and the Japanese* (Boston, 1860), p. 572. For his uncited sources, see Karl Peter Thunberg, *Travels in Europe, African, and Asia: performed between the years 1770 and 1779* (3 vols., London, 1793–5), III, pp. 251–2; Philipp Franz von Siebold, *Nippon: Archiv zur Beschriebung von Japan (*2 vols., Würzburg, 1897), I, pp. 299–303.

In the following decades, Westerners collected an unprecedented amount of data regarding Japan and its people. Although none of them referred to the Japanese as a distinct race in biological terms, most of them conceived the Japanese as a separate ethnic entity. The discourse on the Japanese race intensified, given that the reality visitors faced could not be explained by simplistic accounts. Some visitors encountered physiognomic types that did not match their images of Asians. Others, who had come to Japan to find an 'Asian' nation, were baffled by the differences between the Japanese and other Asians and the Chinese in particular. Reports of ethnologists who found the Ainu, a separate ethnic group which inhabits the northern part of Japan, to have European-like features stimulated questions regarding another enigmatic racial element within Japanese territories. Finally, racially biased observers were bewildered by 'noble' behaviour and successful 'adaptation' to Western technology among Japanese.

The racial discourse that developed in the five decades following the abrupt end of Japan's seclusion until the Russo-Japanese War was made even more complex due to the wide range of participants. Not only did they come from different countries, and occasionally could not communicate with each other, but they also belonged to three professionally distinct groups. The first group consisted of people I refer to as 'specialists', such as ethnographers, physicians, and archeologists, who came to Japan mainly for research and provided most of the primary data on its people. The 'impressionists', namely short-term visitors, non- 'specialist' residents, as well as popular and travel writers, comprised the second group. They popularized their own and others' experiences as well as findings or theories of the 'specialists', and often served as the initial source of information, however biased, any 'specialist' could access. The third group, the 'raciologists', were prominent scholars of race and anthropology, who had no close contact with Japan. While utilizing the data generated by members of the first group, they also shaped a distinct theoretical framework.

II

The terminology Westerners used in discussing the Japanese race in this period was imbued with implicit nuances derived from a peculiar racial and political context. On the eve of Perry's arrival and during the years that followed, convictions of racial superiority and manifest destiny echoed in the beliefs held by a number of American politicians and writers, concerning a justified penetration of regions occupied by 'inferior races'. The opening of Japan and the whole American thrust into the Pacific were to be, in Reginald Horsman's words, 'the grand culmination of the movement that had begun so long ago in the highlands of central Asia'.[15] By the 1850s, American racial

[15] Reginald Horsman, *Race and manifest destiny: the origins of American racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), p. 286.

prejudice had already been well defined, and it was generally believed in the United States that 'a superior American race was destined to shape the destiny of much of the world'. Americans also believed that in their outward thrust they were to encounter 'a variety of inferior races incapable of sharing in America's republican system and doomed to permanent subordination or extinction'.[16]

American racial perceptions did not emerge in an intellectual vacuum. Among the leading colonial powers of West Europe – England, France, and Germany – theories of national superiority had been postulated earlier. During the century that preceded the opening of Japan, European theorists developed numerous ideas regarding national superiority, based on the ethnic composition of their own particular country, which were the initial sources of American self-aggrandizement.[17] Whereas theories of racial superiority were a fairly modern phenomenon in the West, racial attitudes that led to these theories had been moulded during several centuries of colonial conquest and degrading encounters with non-Europeans, and ethnic minorities within Europe itself.

With the Enlightenment, scientism had began to play a role in shaping these attitudes; a process that culminated in the middle of the nineteenth century. At the core of emerging racial theories lay phenotypic differences between groups, especially differences in the head and the face. Several disciplines, such as physiognomy, phrenology and craniology, were especially useful in revealing differences that could be interpreted as evidence for White superiority over all other races. These theories also contained a more implicit notion that the gulf separating Caucasians from the 'dark' races was unbridgeable.[18] 'The dark races,' wrote a Washington physician, 'were capable of some improvement, but could never equal the whites.'[19] In England, the anatomist Robert Knox echoed this characterization in his notorious book *Races of men*, arguing that the 'dark race of men' could not be taught true civilization and had slim chances of survival in the future struggle for resources.[20]

Where did the Japanese stand in this order? Very few racial theorists referred specifically to the Japanese. They dealt with broader racial categories, not with minor questions of sub-groups. Asians, in general, were rather

[16] Ibid., p. 6.

[17] On the development of these attitudes in the United States, see John S. Haller, *Outcasts from evolution: scientific attitudes of racial inferiority, 1859–1900* (Urbana, 1971); Horsman, *Race and manifest destiny*; Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American thought* (Boston, 1960); Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America* (Boulder, 1993). On racial thought in Europe during that period, see Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan myth: a history of racist and nationalist ideas in Europe* (London, 1974); George W. Stocking, *Victorian anthropology* (New York, 1987).

[18] Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, *Types of mankind* (Philadelphia, 1854), pp. 53, 77.

[19] *Southern Literary Messenger*, 5 (Sept. 1839), pp. 616–20, cited by Horsman, *Race and manifest destiny*, p. 141.

[20] Knox characterized the 'dark races', in which he included the Japanese, as having inferior physical strength and smaller brain with a darker tissue. In Robert Knox, *The races of men: a fragment* (Philadelphia, 1850), p. 150.

marginal in a racial discourse that focused primarily on either the dichotomy between Caucasians and Negroes (and occasionally native Americans) or a racial hierarchy among the Caucasians themselves. Yet none of the theorists had much doubt, especially in the mid-nineteenth century, regarding the Japanese. If asked to classify them, most of them were to follow the prevailing anthropological approach of the time, which considered the Japanese as members of the vast Mongolian (sometimes referred to as 'Tartaric' or 'Turanian') race, or its Malayan variant.[21] In crude racial terms, theorists made only a little distinction between the Chinese, Japanese, and other peoples of the region, and looked upon all of them as being much inferior and yet relatively closer (as compared to other races) to Caucasians.[22] At the same time, the Japanese were regarded as members of a distinct 'race', much as Italians, Irish, and other national groups, were so defined. Although this reflected the ambivalence surrounding the concept, notions of race could also have an implicit biological rationale as in the Lamarckian (and Spencerian) assumption regarding the inheritance of acquired characteristics within people sharing a specific environment.[23]

In a frantic quest for parameters that could prove the existence of distinct and unequal racial types, Western scholars found – often based on biased sampling, statistical fallacy, and even deliberate falsifications – numerous physical differences that placed Caucasians at the top, Africans on the bottom, and Mongolians, Malays, and native Americans in between. Peter Camper, who invented the 'facial angle' at the end of the eighteenth century, provided one of the first 'scientific' measures to line up mankind from the Greek ideal down to the apes.[24] By 1860, the facial angle had become the most frequent means of explaining the gradation of species,[25] and in the following decades, scholars elaborated a long list of additional facial and corporal traits that could confirm prevalent notions of racial ranking.[26] In this context, we may understand the racial undertones found occasionally in the descriptions of the Japanese wide nasal aperture, recession of the chin, and prognathism (forward projection of the lower face, which means low facial angle).[27]

[21] See, for example, Oscar Peschel, *Völkerkunde* (Leipzig, 1874), p. 400.

[22] Nancy Stepan, *The idea of race in science, 1800–1960* (Hemden, CT, 1982), p. 55. Typical for that approach was the late nineteenth-century four-tier classification of the French thinker, Gustave Le Bon. According to Le Bon, the Japanese, together with the Chinese, Tartars, and Mongols, were members of the yellow 'intermediate' race, stationed above the 'primitive' and the 'inferior' races, but below the white 'superior' race. In Gustave Le Bon, *The psychology of peoples* (New York, 1912 [1894]).

[23] See Stocking, *Victorian anthropology*, p. 235.

[24] On Camper's definition of the facial angle, see James Sidney Slotkin, ed., *Reading in early anthropology* (Chicago, 1965), p. 198.

[25] Haller, *Outcasts from evolution*, p. 11.

[26] See, for example, Daniel G. Brinton, *Races and peoples: lectures on the science of ethnography* (Philadelphia, 1890), pp. 40–8.

[27] See William Gray Dixon, *The land of the morning: an account of Japan and its people, based on a four years' residence in that country, including travels into the remotest parts of the interior* (Edinburgh, 1882), pp. 24–5; Basil Hall Chamberlain, *Things Japanese* (London, 1905 [1890]), pp. 250–1; Isabella Lucy Bird, *Unbeaten tracks in Japan* (New York, 1880), p. 255.

Another important measure was the cephalic index (the ratio between the breadth and length of the cranium) developed by the Swede Anders Retzius in the 1840s. Retzius separated mankind into two types, brachycephalic (broad-headed) peoples and dolichocephalic (long-headed) peoples, and advanced the theory that human evolution proceeded from the former, including east Europeans and most Mongolians, to the latter, as in north Europeans. When studies showed that 'inferior' Africans and Australian aborigines were also dolichocephalic, the debate shifted to concern brain size, which was supposed to indicate more accurately the level of intelligence and evolutionary development. The American physician and skull collector, Samuel Morton, claimed to validate the prevailing notion of racial hierarchy with his measurements of cranium capacity.[28] Morton's mid-century findings placed Mongolians (including the Malay sample), despite their 'mummified intelligence', second from the top yet far below members of the 'Teutonic family'.[29]

At least as important was the theory of recapitulation, whose primary progenitor at this stage was the French anatomist Etienne Serres.[30] Based on earlier biological observations, Serres advanced an earlier hypothesis that higher creatures repeat the adult stage of inferior creatures during their own growth, and accordingly, he argued, black adults resemble white children, and Mongolians resemble adolescents.[31] This seemingly simplistic idea became the foundation of a highly influential general theory of biological determinism that reached its peak in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Although the theory aimed primarily to affirm white superiority and black inferiority, it had poignant implications for the racial status of Mongoloids in general and the Japanese in particular.

One of the notorious repercussions of this theory was the association between 'Mongolism' and a severe form of idiotism. An English physician, J. Down, observed that various forms of retardation among Caucasians resembled the

[28] 'This race,' wrote Morton's contemporary, the American phrenologist Samuel Wells, about the Mongolians (in which he included the Japanese) 'is next to the Caucasian in the scale of civilization, but is not celebrated for mental power'. In Samuel R. Wells, *The illustrated annuals of phrenology and physiognomy for the years 1865–6–7–8 and 1869* (New York, 1869), p. 35.

[29] Haller, *Outcasts from evolution*, pp. 18–19. For an overview of Morton's work, see Samuel George Morton, 'Observations on the size of the brain in various races and families of man', *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences Philadelphia*, 4 (1849), pp. 221–4. See a criticism of Morton's measurements in Stephan Jay Gould, 'Morton's ranking of races by cranial capacity', *Science*, 200 (1978), pp. 503–9; a rejoinder to Gould in J. Philippe Rushton, 'The evolution of racial differences: a response to M. Lynn', *Journal of Research in Personality*, 23 (1989), pp. 7–20. See additional early studies on Asian intelligence in Frederick W. Farrar, 'Aptitude of race', *Ethnological Society of London*, *Transactions*, 5 (1866), p. 123; John Crawfurd, 'On the physical and mental characteristics of the European an Asiatic races of man', *Ethnological Society of London*, *Transactions*, 5 (1866), p. 60.

[30] See a detailed discussion of the theory of recapitulation in Stephan Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and phylogeny* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), pp. 13–206.

[31] Etienne Serres, 'Principes d'embryogénie, de zoogénie et de teratogénie', *Mémoire de l'Académie des Sciences*, 25 (1860), p. 765, cited in Gould, *Ontogeny and phylogeny*, p. 127.

features of 'lower' non-white peoples.[32] Accordingly, 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'. Remarkably, although most of Down's race-related terminology vanished as recapitulation lost its favour, this term somehow lingered years after his death.[33]

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, small and undefined nose, and scarcity of facial hair in men and body hair in general, as proof of their theory.[34] In this context, we should re-examine prevalent references to the Japanese in this period as 'child-like' people. Although it was not centrally part of the racial discourse, the view that the Japanese are 'gentle, amiable, civil, gay, good-natured, and childish' appears to have both a strong colonial flavour and the heavy stamp of recapitulation.[35] On the whole, recapitulation had a 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'.[36]

The rise of the theory of evolution, the pinnacle in the scientific thought of the latter half of the nineteenth century, only strengthened earlier racist views. Charles Darwin, who firmly established the concept of evolution at that time, never doubted that there were important internal differences between the races, and that there was a hierarchy of cultural advancement, with white Europeans on top and natives of different colours on the bottom.[37] Moreover, Darwin's main notion concerning continuity can be interpreted as indicating 'the use of lower races to fill the gap between animals and man'.[38] This suggestion of human affinity to the apes prompted many of his disciples to see a simian resemblance ubiquitously. This theory, once used to describe only Africans (and Irish), was now applied to any non-white people, wherein the Japanese were no exception.

[32] J. L. H. Down, 'Observations on an ethnic classification of idiots'. *London Hospital Report* (London, 1866), pp. 259–62. This genetic pathology is known now as 'trisomy-21' or 'Down's Syndrome'.

[33] For Dr Down and recapitulation, see the chapter 'Dr. Down's Syndrome' in Stephan Jay Gould, *The panda's thumb: more reflections in natural history* (New York, 1980), pp. 160–8.

[34] Curiously, several decades later, an opposite theory called neoteny referred to many of these 'inferior' characteristics as indicators of 'advanced' evolution, because they showed greater evolutionary distance from the apes. In Gould, *Ontogeny and phylogeny*, pp. 134–5, 358–9.

[35] Joseph Alexander von Hübner, *A ramble round the world, 1871* (London, 1884), p. 221; also the following statement made by an English politician, Sir Charles Dilke, later cabinet secretary and member of the committee of the Aborigines Protection Society: 'All who love children must love the Japanese, the most gracious, the most courteous, and the most smiling of all peoples', in Charles Wentworth Dilke, 'English influence in Japan', *Fortnightly Review*, n.s., 20 (1876), p. 443.

[36] Stephan Jay Gould, *The mismeasure of man* (New York, 1981), p. 115.

[37] Marvin Harris, *The rise of anthropological theory* (New York, 1968), p. 119; Stephen Jay Gould, *Eight little piggies: reflections in natural history* (New York, 1993), p. 266.

[38] Stepan, *The idea of race in science*, p. 55.

After Darwin, the issue of race 'became the wholly decisive explanations in far wider circles, [and] racism was accepted and became the central element in British imperial ideology'.[39] Toward the end of the century, an increasing number of writers, even the prominent John Ruskin, Pierre Loti, and Charles Baudelaire, adopted *ad nauseam* simian images when describing Japanese features and behaviour.[40]

III

Despite the association between the Japanese and the Mongoloid race in the Western mind, one of the notable facets of racial portraits in this period was the attempt to distance the Japanese from the Chinese, the backbone of the Mongolian race. This effort is of special interest due to the fact that few Westerners could actually distinguish Japanese and Chinese individuals, and that it reveals, perhaps, more about the status of China in this period than about Japan. Although the explicit attempt to distinguish between the two peoples had started during the early part of the eighteenth century, it grew bolder, primarily due to the rapid decline of China's international status, at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[41] The historian Harold Isaacs, who identified six stages in the evolution of Western attitudes toward China, referred to the period between 1840 and 1905 as the 'Age of Contempt'.[42] Yet, there is no doubt that the transformation from the 'Age of Respect' had started earlier.[43]

The admiration Europeans felt for the laws and government of China, during the eighteenth century, vanished as China's population overgrowth and ineffective government weakened its military stand vis-à-vis the expanding European powers. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Americans had an additional source of disdain toward the Chinese, as thousands of 'faceless' male labourers reached the west coast, willing to work in the most demanding and demeaning occupations. Perhaps this cross-cultural encounter, and resulting economic competition with frugal immigrants, made Americans more biased toward the Chinese as compared to Europeans.[44] For both Americans and

[39] Sven Lindqvist, '*Exterminate all the brutes*' (New York, 1996), p. 130.

[40] Pierre Loti, *Madame Chrysanthème* (New York, 1893), pp. 133, 63; John Ruskin, *Time and tide, letter VI* (Orpington, 1882), p. 33; Charles Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes*, '*mon Coeur mis à nu*' (Paris, 1949), p. 75.

[41] Kaempfer, *The history of Japan*, p. 81; Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire et description générale du Japan* (2 vols., Paris, 1736), excerpts reprinted in Peter Kapitza, ed., *Japan in Europe- texte und bildokumente zur Europäischen Japankenntnis von Marco Polo bis Wilhelm von Homboldt* (2 vols., Munich, 1990), II, p. 336.

[42] Harold Robert Isaacs, *Scratches on our minds: American images of China and India* (New York, 1958), p. 71.

[43] Raymond Dawson, *The Chinese chameleon: an analysis of European conceptions of Chinese civilization* (London, 1967), p. 133.

[44] On the domestic adaptation of the negative stereotype of the Chinese in the United States, see Stuart Creighton Miller, *The unwelcome immigrant: the American image of the Chinese, 1785–1882* (Berkeley, 1969), pp. 154–66.

Europeans, however, the once-revered emperor of China became the epitome of corrupted Asiatic despotism and his subjects were depicted as degenerated human beings. In less than a century, China emerged as a semi-civilized nation suffering from 'arrested development',[45] a 'fossilized representation of an antique system, physically active but mentally inert'.[46] Even its past achievement, some asserted recklessly, 'must have belonged to some other race'.[47]

The opening of Japan facilitated its role to replace China and to be favourably perceived by the West: a charming, exotic, and relatively developed country. Japan, at least, seemed less stagnant than China, and its willingness to emulate the West was gratifying. Moreover, it was reputed to be a land of great beauty, and was much admired for its aesthetic style in certain artistic circles in the West. Visitors sent exalting reports on the 'moral' character of the natives, which greatly differed, they maintained, from any other Asians.[48] On the whole the Japanese, judges the historian Jean-Pierre Lehmann, 'received much more favourable treatment than would appear to have been meted out to most other non-Western peoples'.[49] The rise of Japan at a time of Chinese decline was, perhaps, not accidental. Harold Isaac's chronology of Western attitudes toward China suggests that whenever China was despised Japan was in favour, and vice versa, and that this pattern was to repeat itself even after the Second World War.

The aim to distinguish the Japanese from the Chinese had only a slight relation to the rise of scientism. Rather, most of the writings were generated by 'impressionists'. In 1852, a year of primordial British public interest in Japan, MacFarlane noted that physiognomy was one of the reasons the Japanese could not originate from the Chinese: 'Although strongly marked with the Mongol type, the Japanese bear a stronger resemblance to the European family, and their eyes are not so deeply sunk in their heads as those of the Chinese.' Evidently, there were also physical and moral reasons for that: 'the Japanese are a stronger, hardier, and braver race than the Chinese'.[50] The English journalist Alexander Knox, who wrote for the authoritative *Edinburgh*

[45] In his lecture at the Ethnographical Society on 27 March 1866, Frederick Farrar classified China as belonging to the 'semicivilized people', above the savage people but under the civilized Aryan and Semitic people. See Farrar, 'Aptitude of race', p. 120.

[46] Charles Morris, *Man and his ancestor* (New York, 1900), p. 194.

[47] Knox, *The races of men*, p. 188.

[48] The following characterization made by German raciologist Oscar Peschel is typical for the period: 'They are the only Asiatics who have a chivalrous and keenly susceptible sense of honour … In other respects also they approach more nearly in character to the people of the West than any other Mongoloid nation: their instinct for cleanliness distinguishes them most favorably from the Chinese'. In Peschel, *Völkerkunde*, *p.* 401.

[49] Jean-Pierre Lehmann, *The image of Japan: from feudal isolation to world power*, *1850–1905* (London, 1978), p. 47.

[50] Charles MacFarlane, *Japan; an account, geographical and historical, from the earliest period at which the islands composing this empire were known to Europeans, down to the present time; and the expedition fitted out in the Unites States, etc.* (London, 1852), p. 164.

Review, held a similar view. Based on a variety of old sources, ranging from the navigator William Adams to von Siebold, Knox maintained that 'a very high degree' of differences in origins and character prevailed between the Japanese and the Chinese.[51]

In the early 1860s, James White became the main writer on Japan for the influential *Blackwood's Magazine*. In contrast to his predecessors, White had first-hand experience in Japan. Still, he too complied with the editor's positive (and well-selling) approach toward this country, and emphasized the differences between the pleasant-looking, clean Japanese, and the 'ideal Chinaman, low-browed, broad-mouthed, twinkling-eyed, cunning, sneaking and altogether fantastical in his divergence from the ordinary workmanship even of nature's journeyman'.[52] At the same time, the recollections of the Baron Gros, the queen's special high commissioner in China, were published in Glasgow and London. Gros depicted the Japanese as more honest, clean, and brave than the Chinese, and over all as 'a superior race to those who people China'. He associated Japanese moral traits with their physiognomy, and thus concluded that 'the Japanese, with skins as white as our own, cannot be the descendants of the yellow sons of Han'.[53]

Americans visitors to Japan made a similar distinction. 'The Japanese women,' wrote the traveller Anna d'Almeida in the early 1860s, 'are, in general, much better-looking than the Chinese … There are many, however, whose faces proclaim their Chinese origin, the offspring, probably, of some of those intermarriages which occasionally take place.'[54] James Lawrence, who visited the Far East aboard the USS *Wachusett* in 1868 and observed the two peoples, also felt dislike for the Chinese physical appearance. 'In stature,' he wrote, 'the Chinese are comparatively short, with thick bodies; complexion, of a light-yellowish cast; features, closely resembling those of a Negro.'[55] In contrast, his physical portrait of the Japanese was much more favourable, and corresponded to his perception of their merits, such as honesty, courtesy, and intelligence. 'As a race', he concluded, the Japanese 'are far superior to the Chinese – the features more regular, and the complexion less sallow.'[56]

Charles Eden, who revised an earlier edition of a French anthology on Japan, found at about the same period that 'the resemblance the Japanese bear to the Chinese is not nearly marked as popular opinion would have it'. He

[51] Alexander Andrew Knox, 'Japan', *Edinburgh Review*, 96 (1852), p. 355.

[52] James White, 'Lord Elgin's mission to China and Japan', *Blackwood's Magazine*, 87 (1860), p. 255.

[53] Marquis Alfred de Moges, *Recollections of Baron Gros's embassy to China and Japan in 1857–1858* (London, 1860), pp. 334, 332.

[54] Anna d'Almeida, *A lady's visit to Manila and Japan* (London, 1863), p. 202.

[55] James B. Lawrence, *China and Japan, and a voyage thither: an account of a cruise in the waters of the East Indies, China, and Japan* (Hartford, 1870), p. 137.

[56] Lawrence, *China and Japan*, p. 216. For similar impressions during this period, see Richard Mounteney Jephson and Edward Pennell Elmhirst, *Our life in Japan* (London, 1869), p. 379; David Wedderburn, 'Modern Japan II', *Fortnightly Review*, n.s. 23, (1878), p. 539.

proclaimed that the faces of the former 'are longer and more regular, their noses more prominent, and their eyes less sloped. The men are naturally very hirsute, but they never wear beards … The shade of their skin is totally unlike the yellow complexions of the Chinese.'[57] A decade later, William Dixon, who taught English in the Imperial College of Engineering in Tokyo, asserted that the Japanese were an 'utterly distinct race from the Chinese; their language and traditions conclusively declare this'. Dixon acknowledged some affinity with the Koreans and Manchurians, although 'even here the resemblance is not striking'. Eventually, he concluded that 'they are so far related to all of these races of the adjoining mainland in being with them members of the great Turanian stock, seem undoubted'.[58]

Yet, not all regarded the Japanese as superior to the Chinese. Those who disliked the former used comparisons with the latter to stress their negative traits. The traveller–writer, Isabella Bird, for example, confessed that

> one cannot be a day in Yokohama without seeing quite a different class of Orientals from the small, thinly-dressed, and usually poor-looking Japanese … [the Chinaman] walks through the streets with his swinging gait and air of complete self-complacency, as though he belonged to the ruling class. He is tall and big … He looks thoroughly 'well-to-do'.[59]

Bird was not impressed by the Japanese and especially deterred by their Mongolian features: 'The yellow skins, the stiff horse hair, the feeble eye-lids, the elongated eyes, the sloping eyebrows, the flat noses, the sunken chests, the Mongolian features, the puny physique, the shaky walk of the men, the restricted totter of the women, and the general impression of degeneracy conveyed by the appearance of the Japanese.'[60]

IV

The distinction Westerners made between the Chinese, the people they were most familiar with in the Orient, and the Japanese created a conceptual vacuum. On the one hand, scientists still regarded the Japanese as members of the Mongolian race. On the other hand, many emphasized their dissimilarity to the Chinese, the epitome of that race. 'Impressionists', in particular, showed an anxious need to place the local population within familiar ethnic categories. This, as well as the growing appreciation expressed for Japanese civilization,

[57] Charles Henry Eden, *Japan, historical and descriptive* (London, 1877), pp. 239–40. For a replication of this description see Trumbull White, *Glimpses of the Orient, or the manners, customs, life and history of the people* (Philadelphia, 1897), pp. 284–85.

[58] Dixon, *The land of the morning*, p. 27.

[59] Bird, *Unbeaten tracks in Japan*, p. 15. Fifteen years later, Katharine Baxter had a similar impression of the Chinese in Yokohama. She was much impressed by a 'tall Chinaman – a striking figure, with that wonderful gravity that never deserts him … he has an air of belonging to a superior race'. In Katharine Schuyler Baxter, *In bamboo land* (New York, 1895), p. 52.

[60] Bird, *Unbeaten tracks in Japan*, p. 255.

made many visitors feel a confusion regarding the local population. Charles Eden conceded that 'the conjectures concerning the origin of this strange race are numerous'.[61] His compatriot, William Dixon, spoke with uncertainty about the Japanese in the 1880s: 'Much obscurity still hangs over the origins of the Japanese people. Various writers have attempted to identify them with the Malays, the Chinese, the Tartars, and even the lost tribes of Israel.'[62] Even eminent 'raciologists', such as Charles Brace, the author of *The races of the Old World*, occasionally admitted that 'it is difficult as yet to obtain trustworthy accounts of the races, in the various island which make up this empire'.[63]

At times when even 'specialists' were uncertain, 'impressionists' made bizarre speculations on the racial affinity of the Japanese. Many of them observed some resemblance to Europeans, which usually meant those from southern Europe. Charles Eden noted that Japanese 'are much of the same type as the Spaniards and the inhabitants of the south of France'.[64] Twenty years later, the American journalist Trumbull White repeated Eden's statement verbatim, demonstrating that certain novice ethnographers may plagiarize rather than rely on their own senses.[65] In a similar anthology aimed at American readers, the journalist Bayard Taylor, who had joined Perry's expedition several decades earlier, repeated undated clichés and drawings from Alcock's already archaic book *The capital of the tycoon*: 'The Japanese are of medium stature, and have not much resemblance to the Chinese, either in face, form, or complexion, The only European race which they sometimes suggest in their appearance, is the Portuguese.'[66] In Taylor's description the Japanese colour varied, according to the classes of society, 'from the dark, coppery-brown of the Malays to the dead-white or tawny of Southern Europe', which certainly did not resemble the 'yellow' colour of the Chinese.[67]

Scholars highly familiar with Japan were also inclined to such a portrayal. Johann Rein, for example, stated that 'the Japanese society exhibits a surprisingly large variety and mutability in feature and complexion'. Rein, professor of geography at the university of Marburg and the author of a highly regarded geographical and historical account of Japan, believed 'the latter, although generally speaking much darker than among Caucasians, approximated in occasional instances to even the fair clear complexion of the Germanic peoples'. Similar to many other visitors to Japan, he was baffled to observe that

[61] Eden, *Japan*, p. 66. Eden mentioned three hypotheses about the peoples the Japanese may have originated from: the Chinese, the Babylonians, and the Tartars.

[62] Dixon, *The land of the morning*, p. 27.

[63] Charles Loring Brace, *The races of the old world: a manual of ethnology* (London, 1870), p. 160.

[64] Eden, *Japan*, p. 239.

[65] White, *Glimpses of the Orient*, p. 284.

[66] Bayard Taylor, *Japan in our day* (New York, 1892), rev. by William Elliot Griffis, pp. 76–7. MacFarlane was the first to compare the Japanese with the Portuguese.'In some parts of the islands,' he wrote, 'even the common people, if dressed in our costume, might pass for Portuguese, or southern Italians, or Sicilians. Many of the upper classes, or members of the old families, are tall, exceedingly handsome in figure and countenance, and are far more like Europeans than Asiatics.' In MacFarlane, *Japan*, p. 164.

[67] Taylor, *Japan in our day*, pp. 76–7.

'not unfrequently the symmetry and regularity of feature are so great and so discrepant from the prevailing Mongolian type, that we imagine we are in the presence of a well-formed European'.[68]

A number of writers suggested Japanese affinity with the Jews, thus reproducing earlier European speculations about a common ancestry between Jews and various European and non-European peoples. Surprisingly, they not only lacked an anti-Semitic bent but attempted to connect the Japanese and the Judaic-Christian, European civilization.[69] In fact, since the outset of the Exploration Era, Europeans attempted to link almost any newly discovered people to the Ten Lost Tribes.[70] Now it was the turn of the Japanese. In an article based on a report by a member of Perry's crew, the English journalist William Aytoun suggested that 'Japan must have been originally peopled from the lost tribes of Israel, for no other race could have devised a scheme so eminently subtle and successful.'[71] Sherard Osborn, who had come to Japan with Lord Elgin's expedition, was among the first to provide the British public with an authentic glimpse of the country. Despite his experience, Osborn chose to follow Aytoun's suggestion, remarking that 'it was impossible not to recognize in their colour, features, dress and customs, the Semitic stock whence they must have sprung'.[72]

The seeds germinated by Aytoun and Osborn were harvested by the Scot businessman and independent missionary Norman McLeod. Residing for several years in Japan, McLeod ventured to offer a full theory on the common ancestry of Japanese and Jews.[73] Like his predecessors, he was astonished to find 'many Jewish faces similar to those I saw on the continent', and even the Emperor much resembled, he discovered, 'the noble Jewish family of von Epstein'.[74] Facial resemblance led to further analogies. Japanese shrines are built of cedar, he remarked, as was the Jewish Temple, and Jews carried the

[68] Johann Justus Rein, *Japan*: *travels and researches* (London, 1884 [1880]), p. 391.

[69] Toshio Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian mind: a study of stereotyped images of a nation, 1850–1880* (Houndsmills, 1987), pp. 51–2.

[70] Ben Ami Shillony, *The Jews and the Japanese: the successful outsiders* (Rutland and Tokyo, 1992).

[71] William E. Aytoun, 'American explorations: China and Japan'. *Blackwood's Magazine*, 81 (1857), p. 717.

[72] Sherard Osborn, 'A cruise in Japanese waters', *Blackwood's Magazine*, 85 (1859), p. 60. Three decades later, William Aytoun's theory was echoed in a book written by Otakesan Buhicrosan, a Japanese married to the proprietor of the model Japanese village in London. Buhicrosan wrote that the Japanese ancestors were Jews, who at one time had been compelled to send 'their nearest and dearest' to Yeddo. In Otakesan Buhicrosan, *Japan, past and present* (Cheapside, 1885), p. 9; cited in John Ashmead, 'The idea of Japan, 1853–1895: Japan as described by American and other travellers from the West' (D.Phil. thesis, Harvard, 1951), p. 199.

[73] Norman McLeod, *Epitome of ancient history of Japan* (Nagasaki, 1875); Norman McLeod, *Japan and the lost tribes of Israel* (Nagasaki, 1879). McLeod must have been aware of the existence of an earlier publication, Edward Heine's *Forty-seven identifications of the British nation with the lost ten tribes of Israel*, a bestseller published in 1871, which led to the establishment of the British Israelites movement.

[74] McLeod, *Japan and the lost tribes of Israel*, pp. 1–5. For further discussion of McLeod's ideas see Shillony, *The Jews and the Japanese*, pp. 135–6.

Ark of God as the Japanese do with their *mikoshi* (portable shrine). McLeod believed the Jews crossed Asia, conquered China, Korea, and later, headed by a Jewish–Korean leader known as Emperor Jimmu, they crossed the sea and took over the Japanese archipelago.

Toward the end of the century, several German scholars became interested in the ostensible Jewish roots of the Japanese, following reports that Portuguese–Jewish features could be observed among certain Japanese women. The anthropologist Albrecht Wirth ascribed these Semitic features to one of the Malay subspecies found in Japan, which has a nose and facial expression 'reminding one of rabbis rather than of Bedouins'.[75] Although several other 'specialists', such as Joest and Erwin Baelz, presented photographs of a Japanese 'Jewish-type' in academic meetings, the rarity of 'proper' features hindered the issue from gaining serious consideration.[76]

Others observed a resemblance to native Americans. For Sir Rutherford Alcock, the British representative in Japan since 1859, the Japanese were 'looking very like North American Indians in their war paint, and there resemblance is very close … that when they see fit to dress themselves like decent people elsewhere, there is notable change in the whole man'.[77] That was also the view of Edward Morse, the first professor of zoology at the university of Tokyo and a future aficionado of that country, who stayed in Japan intermittently during 1877–83: 'their self-composure, or rather reticence, in grief reminds one of the North American Indian'.[78] Alcock, an aspiring 'specialist' but nevertheless an 'impressionist', typified, perhaps, the doubtful observer of the period: 'It is neither Chinese nor European, nor can the type be said to be purely Asiatic. The Japanese seem rather to be like the Greeks of the ancient world, forming a link between Europe and Asia; and put forth claims to be ranked inferior to neither race in *some* of their best qualities; yet very strangely blending many of the worst characteristics of both.'[79] On the Japanese woman he wrote: 'Were it not for such perverse ingenuity in marring nature's fairest work, many among them might make some considerable pretensions to beauty … The type … is neither Malay nor Mongol.'[80]

[75] Albrecht Wirth, 'Aborigines in Japan', *American Anthropologist*, 9 (1896), p. 255. This notion may have stemmed from the naturalist Alfred Wallace, who was probably the first to argue that the Papuans, members of the 'Malay race', have a 'Semitic' facial features. In Alfred Wallace, 'Varieties of man in the Malay archipelago', *Anthropological Review*, 1 (1863), p. 441.

[76] See Carl Heinrich Stratz, *Die Korperformen in Kunst und Leben der Japaner* (Stuttgart, 1902), pp. 32–5; Johann Justus Rein, *Japan: nach Reisen und Studien* 2nd edn, (Leipzig, 1905), p. 527.

[77] Rutherford Alcock, *The capital of the tycoon: a narrative of a three years' residence in Japan* (2 vols. London, 1863), I, pp. 196–7.

[78] Edward Sylvester Morse, *Japan day by day 1977, 1878–1879, 1882–1883* (2 vols., Boston, 1917), I, p. 229. [79] Alcock, *The capital of the tycoon*, I, pp. 222–3. [80] Ibid., p. 192.

V

Throughout the nineteenth century, physical anthropologists and ethnographers endeavoured to acquire enough scientific skills to justify their practice to be fully accepted as an academic discipline. In the latter half of that century, their theories were based on anthropometric measurements, linguistic analyses, historical records, and archaeological findings. Nevertheless, because the concept of race has been primarily a cultural construct, the profusion of information regarding Japan did not put an end to the discourse on the Japanese 'race' but rather brought about the opposite effect. Hence, in the middle of the 1870s, Western scholars still disagreed over the origins of the Japanese and the exact racial composition of the population. They all agreed, however, that the Japanese were not homogeneous.

Measuring fifty Japanese skulls, Doenitz asserted that the Japanese were 'not thoroughly a pure race, and least of all in the northern provinces'.[81] Those who first arrived to Japan, he hypothesized, were the Ainu, barbarian hunters of Mongolian origins. In the seventh century BC, invaders of Malayan extraction led by Jimmu Tenno arrived, while later contacts with China and Korea supplied elements of refined Mongolian culture. Throughout Japanese history, Doenitz concluded, a 'deep-seated and intimate mixture' had been taking place between Mongolian and Malayan types, whereas the Ainu were the only representative of a pure Mongolian race.[82]

Johann Rein, another influential theorist who stayed in Japan during 1874–5 under the commission of the Prussian ministry of commerce, confessed that the solution of the question regarding the Japanese origins presented him with 'special difficulties', as neither the physical characteristics of the people nor the language, the customs, and the mode of life were sufficient to provide an answer. Consequently, he repeated earlier suggestions regarding a Malayan ancestry of the conquering tribes who landed in Kyushu, but differed from Doenitz in the assessment of the importance of this source. First, he reasoned, the inhabitants of the Ryukyu Islands did not resemble Malayans, although one should expect the former to form a link between the Malayans and the Japanese. In addition, he stated how the Japanese language greatly differs from the Malay family of languages, adding how the Japanese national character 'is more akin to the Polynesian than to the Malay'.[83]

Based on Chinese annals which mentioned the invasion of Korea by Tartar tribes in about 1200 BC, Rein suggested that the 'immigrant Japanese were in fact members of that great Altaic family of people'. For Rein, when Jimmu Tenno appeared, however, the fusion between the primitive population of

[81] W. Doenitz, 'Ueber die abstammung der Japaner', *Mittheilungen der Deutsche Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens*, 1 (1875), p. 40. See also W. Doenitz, 'Vorgeschichtliche gräber in Japan', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 9 (1887), p. 126.

[82] Doenitz, *Ueber die Abstammung der Japaner*, pp. 40–1.

[83] Rein, *Travels and researches*, pp. 388–90.

southern Japan with the newcomers had been completed. The population was complemented by 'a partly voluntary, partly compulsory immigration of Coreans – later also, though in a less degree of Chinese … while Emishi [Ainu] from the north were likewise being distributed among the more southern provinces'.[84]

The prospects for a widely accepted theory regarding the Japanese race materialized gradually with Erwin Baelz, who became the leading promulgator of the multiethnic view toward the end of the century. Influenced by his compatriots Doenitz and Rein, Baelz, the German personal physician of Emperor Meiji, presented his views regarding Japanese origins at the German Anthropological Congress in 1885, and in the following years modified his theory several times. Baelz's long acquaintance with Japan, his extensive empirical studies on the Japanese body, and his seemingly objective medical approach enhanced his credibility and helped sustain his ideas well into the twentieth century.

Baelz argued that the oldest inhabitants of Japan were the Ainu, who had lived in Japan since the stone age and inhabited initially the whole island, but invading peoples pushed them gradually toward the north. The Ainu were not Mongolians, but closely related to the Caucasian race. He assumed that the natural path for immigration of that invading population into the Japanese archipelago had been through Korea. This was confirmed, he claimed, by ancient traditions in Japan and findings from the prehistoric period. Those immigrants landed in Kyushu and in the southern part of the west coast of Honshu and brought the first elements of civilization into the island. The linguistic similarity between the Japanese and the Turkish, Hungarian, and Finnish indicated that these people came from central Asia. Hence, the north Mongolian element critically helped to comprise the modern Japanese population, as in China and Korea. A second wave of immigrants, Baelz suggested, were of southern Mongolian extraction, who came either through Korea or along the islands south of Japan. These waves of immigration, particularly the second one, occurred probably in the first millennium before Christ.[85]

VI

Toward the end of the century, theories regarding Japanese racial characteristics focused on distinctions between two types of Japanese, which corresponded with the upper and lower classes but were also supposed to

[84] Rein found many common features between the Japanese and the Poles, such as industriousness, limited needs, light-heartedness, and chivalry, which embodied 'the deep-lying traces of the Tartar influence, which one made itself felt from the Oder to the Pacific'. In Rein, *Travels and researches*, p. 393.

[85] Erwin Baelz, 'Die körplichen Eigenschaften der Japaner', *Mittheilungen der Deutsche Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens*, 3 (1883), pp. 334–46; Erwin Baelz, 'åber die Rassenelemente in Ostasien, Speciell in Japan', *Mittheilungen der Deutsche Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens*, 8 (1900), pp. 227–35; Erwin Baelz, *Die Ostasiaten* (Stuttgart, 1901).

represent two different ethnic origins. The observation that groups with markedly different physiognomy coexisted in Japan had, in fact, old roots. Kaempfer, the forerunner of much of the writings of the nineteenth century, was the first to suggest two Japanese types, separated along class lines. Betraying his Eurocentric prejudices, Kaempfer judged Japanese commoners as short and ugly, 'yet the descendants of the eldest and noblest families of the princes and lords of the empire have somewhat more majestick in their shape and countenance, being more like Europeans'.[86] A century later, Thunberg contended that this difference in appearance was merely a result of exposure to the sun: 'The lower class of people who in summer, when at work, lay bare the upper part of their bodies, are sun-burnt, consequently brown. Ladies of distinction, who seldom go out in the open air without being covered, are perfectly white.'[87]

Several writers echoed Kaempfer's distinction during the nineteenth century. The anthropologist James Prichard referred to the colour differences in Japan as an outcome of geographical differences between high and low places, insisting that 'nobody will venture to attribute the xanthous colour of the Japanese to any other cause than natural variety or deviation from the influence of external agencies'.[88] A case in point is also that of the British surgeon, John Tronson, who noticed 'a marked contrast' in the appearance of the lower and upper classes in Nagasaki. Tronson, who visited Japan as a part of his cruise aboard HMS *Barracouta* in 1854–6, found that

> the former, of fair average height, are athletic and healthy-looking fellows, the upper part of the body being muscular and well developed, and from continual exercise bronzed by constant exposure to the sun and every variety of weather: they are pure specimens of the Mongol race, with high cheek bones, small oblique eyes, jet-black hair, and scanty beards.

In contrast, Tronson observed, the Japanese officials were 'thin, pale, and emaciated in appearance'.[89]

Rein accepted the dual typology of his predecessors and integrated it into his thesis that the Japanese derived from Tartar, Malay, Korean, and indigenous elements. He divided the Japanese into two basic types, wherein the first one

> exhibits a much more decidedly Mongolian countenance than the other. It is marked by a darker colour of skin, reminding us of that of the Malays, a more compact, stunted

[86] Beside class differences in appearance, Kaempfer noted also differences in regional characteristics: 'The inhabitants of the provinces *Satzuma*, *Oosijmi*, and *Fiuga*, are of middle size, strong, couragious, and manly, otherwise civil and polite … The inhabitants of some provinces of *Saikokf*, particularly of *Fisen*, are short, slender, but well shap'd, of a good handsome appearance, and extremely polite. The inhabitants of the great island *Nipon*, particularly of its eastern provinces, are known from others by their big heads, flat noses, and musculous fleshly complexion.' Kaempfer, *The history of Japan*, p. 95.

[87] Thunberg, *Travels in Europe*, III, p. 251.

[88] James Cowles Prichard, *Researches into the physical history of mankind* (5 vols., London, 1851), IV, p. 529.

[89] John M. Tronson, *Personal narrative of a voyage to Japan, Kamtschatka, Siberia, Tartary, and various parts of coast of China; in H.M.S. Barracouta* (London, 1859), pp. 10–11.

figure, with a powerful development of bone and limb. The short, flat face displays under a low brow, almost straight, large eyes, prominent cheek-bones, and a depressed, flat nose, with thick broad alæ. The large mouth is generally open, the gestures are clumsy.[90]

The second type, Rein posited, had

clearer, yellowish-white complexion, a slenderer figure, more symmetry in all the parts of the body, and a slighter development of limb … The large eyes are slit-shaped and veiled by large lids, placed at a more or less oblique angle to the nose, and overhung by lofty eyebrows. The cheek-bones are not noticeably prominent, nor is the mouth; but this is the case with the delicate, slightly aquiline nose.

This type, more akin to Europeans, represented 'nobler and more regular feature'. Rein suggested that the former type was largely found among the peasants and is more common in the north, whereas the latter type was found chiefly among the higher classes and in the south, and thus represented immigrant conquerors of the country.[91]

Baelz adopted Rein's distinction but emphasized its racial content. Initially, he depicted two types, which he referred to as the *fine* ('der feine Typus') and the *coarse* ('der plumpe Typus'). Similar to his predecessors, he associated them with the higher and lower classes, respectively.[92] In this fashion, Baelz succeeded in unifying his observations on the physique and physiognomy of modern Japanese people, alongside his theory of origins. By the turn of the century Baelz had fully conceived his theory, depicting three basic types, as follows.[93]

The Manchu-Korean type (*the true Mongolian type*, *the* '*fine*' *type*). This type had a big, splendid mature figure, with a dolichocephalic skull and long face, broad and high forehead, less prominent cheek bones, round and slanted, though large eyes, a fine (and often distinct Semitic) aquiline nose, a pretty mouth, a slender, long trunk and fine extremities. Such features were common among the upper classes of Japan, and were more related to Europeans than the Malayan-Mongol type.

The Malayan-Mongol type (*the coarse type*). This type had less slanted and often round eyes, broader nose, big mouth with full lips, and brachycephalic round skull with a tendency for prognathism. Its body is strong, with massive and short legs. Such features were more common in east Japan and among the lower classes.

The Aino type. This type was even smaller than the average Japanese, but with stronger build. It had shorter neck and broader, more muscular shoulders. Its head was longer then the Mongols', and had round eyes, short nose, big mouth with swollen lips, and wide jawbone. Its hair development was extreme, with

[90] Rein, *Travels and researches*, p. 391.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Erwin Baelz, 'Die körplichen Eigenschaften der Japaner (Zweiter Teil)', *Mittheilungen der Deutsche Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens*, 4 (1885), p. 57–8. In later years, Baelz slightly modified his view, changing the terms to the *fine Manchu-Korean type* and the *Malayan-Mongol type*.

[93] Baelz, *Die Ostasiaten*, p. 171.

a growth on the body as well. Found mainly in Hokkaido, this type had made the least genetic contribution to the present Japanese population.

Baelz's view prompted Westerners to see 'positive' racial elements among the Japanese, because of its emphasis on aristocratic and magnificent (the Manchu-Korean type) or Caucasoid (the Ainu type) elements. These elements seemed less 'yellow', remote, and thus 'different'. Notwithstanding his methodical measurements, Baelz provided only limited and ad hoc data to support his classification.[94] Still, the Japanese portrait he drew was popular among Western scholars, partly because it provided them with an explanation for Japan's modernization that fitted the zeitgeist. Baelz's own motives in developing his theory may be found in his long attachment to Japan and the fact that he married a Japanese.[95]

Even before Baelz's account was accepted in the circles of 'specialists',[96] a number of 'impressionists' helped popularize it. William Dixon, for example, noted in 1882 that

> a slight study of the different faces we meet shows a marked distinction between the upper and lower classes. While the features of the latter are generally flattish – the lips heavy and slightly pouting, the nose short and broad, the eyes, although narrow, mostly horizontal, or occasionally even inclined downwards from the nose – among the former there prevails a long visage with the bridge of the nose well elevated, and the nose itself often aquiline, the eyes decidedly oblique, and the mouth, although probably somewhat pouting, neither wide nor heavy-lipped.[97]

In the 1890s, James Hyde Clark mentioned 'two distinct types of Japanese face … the aristocratic and rarer type … [and] the commoner and vulgar type'.[98] A decade later, the German ethnologist Carl Stratz published a semi-pornographic book on the Japanese body in which he classified almost any portrait to the fine *Choshu type* and the coarse *Satsuma type*.[99]

Textbooks of anthropology in the *fin de siècle* referred to Japan as a nation of a mixed race, and most of them cited Baelz's hypothesis. Armand de Quatrefages referred to Japan as a place of mixture between white and yellow blood,[100] whereas Alfred Haddon regarded the Japanese as a modern case of his

[94] Baelz,'Die körplichen (Zweiter Teil)' table 14 in the appendix.

[95] For Baelz's long commitment to Japan see his autobiography, Erwin Baelz, *Awakening Japan: the diary of a German doctor* (New York, 1932). Baelz's personal life probably affected his racial attitudes. In contrast to the common antagonism in the West against miscegenation, Baelz, who had two children from his marriage to a Japanese, proclaimed that the offspring of such unions are often beautiful and with skin colour close to that of north Europeans. In Baelz, 'Die körplichen (Zweiter Teil)', p. 40.

[96] See, for example, F. Brinkley, 'Primeval Japanese', in *Annual report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institute* (Washington, 1903), p. 798–9.

[97] Dixon was confident that the Japanese upper classes were purer descendants of the conquering race, who 'landing from the mainland, probably under Jimmu Tennô, became the founder of the Japanese civilization'. Dixon, *The land of the morning*, pp. 199–200.

[98] James Hyde Clark, *Story of China and Japan* (Philadelphia, 1894), pp. 282–5.

[99] Stratz, *Die Korperformen*, pp. 27–8.

[100] Armand de Quatrefages, *The human species* (New York, 1890), p. 273.

contention that in certain peoples one can distinguish between 'a coarse and a fine type'. Haddon based his view on Baelz's observations as well as on evidence he claimed to find in Japanese paintings by Kiyonaga and Utamaro.[101] Likewise, the French anthropologist Joseph Deniker, who wrote his seminal book *The races of man* in 1899, followed Baelz's theory uncritically. The Japanese, Deniker stated, exhibited a certain diversity in their physical type which fluctuated between two principal forms: the fine and the coarse types, the result of 'crossings between Mongol sub-races (northern and southern) and Indonesian or even Polynesian elements'.[102]

VII

The first setback in the positive disposition Westerners had for the Japanese occurred in the early the 1860s as a result of the hostility that visitors sensed, as well as the limited commercial success they gained in the rediscovered islands. Rejected and at times brutally attacked by xenophobic samurais, Westerners expressed their disillusionment toward Japan and a number of British writers began to conceive the Japanese in light of the Asian continent, as part of the Mongoloid race. One of the leading advocates of that view, Sir Rutherford Alcock, stated: 'Here we have a far distant family of the Oriental race to deal with.' Using his long experience in China, Alcock felt he was able to draw a comparative account: 'The Japanese, notwithstanding their advanced state and unquestionable superiority in many respects over every other Oriental nation, still remain true to the original type, to the traditions and the instinct of their race.'[103]

In the following three decades, however, the hostility lessened and Japan was 'granted' a racial moratorium, a limited exemption from its natural, albeit despised, origins. Japan became a paradise for romantic travellers, curio collectors, and technical experts who were paid high sums for their knowledge. The rapid modernization of the country, that is the industrial growth, the spread of railways, and the advent of constitutional government, among other things, as well as the high culture and the good manners of the people, blurred Westerners' desire for blatant racism toward the Japanese. This was an expression of an early tendency to grant the Japanese the status of 'honorary whites' and separate them, at least in Western public representations, from the 'Mongoloid yellow masses' in body and spirit. Popular books about race, such as G. Bettany's *The world's inhabitants* (1888), expressed this sentiment explicitly, stating that 'their physical characters are very different from those of the Mongoloid peoples'.[104]

[101] Alfred Cort Haddon, *The study of man* (London, 1898), p. 72; Edward B. Tylor, *Anthropology: an introduction to the study of man and civilization* (New York, 1904), p. 100.
[102] Joseph Deniker, *The races of man* (London, 1900), pp. 387–9.
[103] Rutherford Alcock, 'China and Japan', *Edinburgh Review*, 122 (1865), pp. 198, 197.
[104] G. T. Bettany, *The world's inhabitants, or, mankind, animals and plants* (London, 1888), p. 399.

These 'lax' attitudes began to fade during the Sino-Japanese War (1894–5), a turning-point in Japan's history that marked its ascent as an international first-class power. Initially, the mass media in the West exalted the triumph of Japan, a nation of 40 million, over a nation ten times bigger. The first stages of the war served as another proof for Japan's uniqueness in an entirely *Asiatic* region. 'Never was a stronger antithesis than that between Japanese and Chinese as at the beginning of this conflict', wrote Trumbull White in 1895. 'It was … the pitting of a trained athlete against a corpulent brewer who hated fighting.'[105] Japan's victory, a number of commentators vainly contended, demonstrated the supremacy of Western technology and Christian virtue.[106] An editorial of the *New York Tribune* proclaimed that the Japanese fighting way was 'peculiarly American in character',[107] whereas William Elliot Griffis, one of America's leading experts on Japan, referred to the war as a crusade introducing China to the modern world.[108]

For others, none the less, the war, and especially the Japanese atrocities in Port Arthur, served as a sudden reminder that the Japanese, however Westernized, were also genuine members of the Mongoloid race.[109] Notable among those affected by the outcomes of the war in the Far East was the German Kaiser, William II, who had an apocalyptic vision about that region. In 1895, he asked his drawing instructor to depict the horrible destruction impending on Europe from the East in an allegorical picture. The Kaiser sent a reproduction of the drawing to some of his royal colleagues as well as to President McKinley, and in the next years he became one of the primary promulgators of the 'yellow peril' idea.[110] At this stage Japan was regarded only as a possible catalyst of China's awakening, the one to provide the expertise and lead the Mongol hordes into the heart of Europe, whereas China embodied the core of the assumed peril.[111]

Affected by the rise of Japan, many Westerners began to view the Japanese, together with the Chinese, as the archetype of the Mongoloid race.[112] The

[105] Trumbull White, *The war in the East* (Philadelphia, 1895), p. 458.

[106] Theodore Ayrault Dodge, 'The eastern war, and after: a military study', *Forum*, 18 (1894), p. 319.

[107] *New York Tribune*, editorial, 28 September 1894.

[108] William Elliott Griffis, 'American relations with the Far East', *New England Magazine*, n.s. 11 (1894), p. 272.

[109] On the response of the American media to the Port Arthur massacre, see Jeffrey Michael Dorwart, 'The pigtail war: the American response to the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895' (D.Phil. thesis, Boston, 1971), pp. 129–43.

[110] Editorial, 'The Far Eastern situation from a German standpoint', *Review of Reviews*, 13 (1896), pp. 3–4.

[111] For views of Japan as a catalyst of China's military awakening, see Henry Davenport Northrop, *The flowery kingdom and the land of the mikado, or China and Japan and Corea* (Philadelphia, 1894), pp. vi–viii; as a future menace, see Dodge, 'The Eastern War, and after', p. 322; Alfred T. Mahan, *The interest of American in sea power, present and future* (Boston, 1897), 123–7. For the Kaiser's antagonism toward Japan following the Sino-Japanese War see Fürst Bernhard von Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow* (4 vols., Boston, 1931–2), I, pp. 57, 505–6; II, pp. 72–3, 98.

[112] Haddon, for example, referred to the 'average' Japanese as a 'very characteristic Mongoloid'. In idem., *The study of man*, p. 76.

subtle distinction between the two peoples vanished, and their mutual skin colour, according to Edward Tylor's book *Anthropology*, was now '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, as well as the slightness of brow-ridges, the slanting aperture of the eyes, and the snub-nose.'[113] In a speech to the Asiatic Society of Japan, the Reverend I. Dooman proclaimed that modern Japanese belonged, together with the Huns, Turks, Mongols, Chinese, and Koreans, to the north Himalaya race, but 'they are the most progressive of all because they are the purest of all'.[114]

Unintentionally, perhaps, Baelz contributed greatly to this trend by clarifying the Asian origins of the Japanese, and their similarity to neighbouring peoples. He adamantly opposed the ethnic separation often made by Europeans between the Japanese and the Chinese or the Koreans, or even between the peoples of South-East Asia. Baelz felt there was no sharp distinction between the Malayan and Mongolian 'types', as the transition from one to the other occurred all over eastern Asia. There were no pure races in Japan, Korea, and China, he argued, and thus one may find a large number of people who might be termed pure Malays, while in South-East Asia 'we may find the most marked slanted-eyed Mongolian type'.[115]

Baelz contended that earlier investigators were influenced too much by outward appearances, especially by dress and hair style. 'To contradict this', he proclaimed,

> I have the testimony of any number of Japanese and Koreans, that they themselves can not distinguish one from the other if costume and methods of hairdressing are the same; and in comparing Japanese and Chinese, the same holds good. Even conceding that the Chinese are generally larger and have softer features, the difference is hardly greater or even as great as between different types in Germany, or between the English and Germans.[116]

The changing views on the Japanese affected the perception of their colour as well. In 1878, the French anthropologist Paul Topinard sought to provide a scientific explanation to the colour division made a century earlier by Johannes Blumenbach.[117] The latter, a leading German naturalist and anthropologist, was the first scientist to use the yellow colour as a distinctive mark of the Mongoloid race. While Blumenbach had not provided any explanation for the colour differences, Topinard advanced a theory of three fundamental elements

[113] Tylor, *Anthropology*, p. 45.

[114] I. Dooman, 'The origins of the Japanese race', *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 25 (1897), p. 17.

[115] Baelz, *Die Ostasiaten*, pp. 20–1; Erwin Baelz, 'Prehistoric Japan', in *Annual report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institute* (Washington, 1907), p. 523–4.

[116] Baelz, *Prehistoric Japan*, p. 524.

[117] Johnnes Friedrich Blumenbach, *De generis humani varietate nativa* (3rd edn, Gottingen, 1795). For an English translation see Thomas Bendyshe, ed., *The anthropological treatises of Blumenbach and Hunter* (London, 1865), p. 209.

of colour in the human organism: red, yellow, and black. When mixed with white tissue, he argued, these elements give rise to numerous shades of the human family, which may be reduced to four fundamental types: 'The white in Europe, the yellow in Asia, the red in American and the black in Africa.'[118]

Toward the end of the century, the colour yellow became almost synonymous with the Japanese, and no observer dared to depict the skin colour of the fairest maiden as white. Eminent 'raciologists' were no exceptions. Deniker, for example, described the Japanese skin colour as varying 'from pale yellow, almost white [but never *really* white], to brownish yellow'.[119]

With the political rise of Japan and the widespread acceptance of new anthropological theory, the racial position of the Japanese became firmer and more consistent than ever. Hence, even the close ties Great Britain, for example, had with Japan at this period could not alter any more the way British authors viewed the Japanese. As such, Basil Chamberlain, one of the chief authorities on Japan by the turn of the century, abandoned the ambiguities regarding the Japanese so common in earlier writings. Stating that 'the Japanese are Mongols', he opened his unflattering depiction of their physical appearance in his popular lexicon-like *Things Japanese*, emphasizing their yellowish skin.[120]

Although favourable in general to the Japanese cause, Chamberlain never totally overcame his Eurocentric aesthetic bias and mixed his presumably scientific portrait of the Japanese body with personal distaste. 'Compared with people of European race', he wrote,

> the average Japanese has a long body and short legs, a large skull with a tendency to prognathism [projecting jaws], a flat nose, coarse hair, scanty eye-lashes, puffy eyelids, a sallow complexion, and a low stature. The average stature of Japanese men is about the same as the average stature of European women.[121]

Walter Del Mar, a globetrotter who visited Japan in 1901, drew a harsher portrait, consistent with the worst stereotypes of the period: 'The peasant's face is rounder and the nose is flat, approaching the African type, whereas the Samurai comes nearer to the Malay or, in some cases to the North American Indian.'[122] Both Chamberlain and Del Mar demonstrate that even temporary alliances and desire for co-operation with Japan could not change the deterioration of the Japanese image. In fact, throughout this period the national identity of the writers on Japan had little effect on their racial attitudes toward the Japanese.

[118] Paul Topinard, *Anthropology* (London 1878), p. 344.
[119] Deniker, *The races of man*, p. 389.
[120] Chamberlain, *Things Japanese*, p. 250.
[121] Ibid., p. 251. For a different view of Chamberlain, which stresses his affection for Japan, see Yuzo Ota, *Basil Hall Chamberlain: portrait of a Japanologist* (Richmond, UK, 1998).
[122] Walter Del Mar, *Around the world through Japan* (London, 1903), p. 299.

VIII

The Russo-Japanese War (1904–5) represents a unique period in the development of the image of Japan, since it served as a short interlude between earlier perceptions of Japan as a curious wonderland and later alarms at the rising bellicose race. During the war, Japan was perceived by most Western nations, Great Britain and the United States in particular, in a positive light. The favourable depiction Japan enjoyed at this time was the outcome of peculiar circumstances: the antagonism toward Tsarist Russia, the pay-off of concentrated efforts by the Japanese government since the Sino-Japanese War to reshape its image in an attempt to mobilize international support, and the effect of lingering naive images of Japan in the West.[123]

Nevertheless, at the same period the racial image of Japan began to crystallize in its negative form. Despite the warm support Japan received in its campaign against the Russian 'bear', its tremendous military success marked a new stage, in racial terms at least, wherein Japanese were looked upon as a threat and lost much of the exotic charm they once embodied. For the German Kaiser, William II, it took only a few days after the war to point his finger at the Japanese: 'This is the yellow peril, the greatest danger threatening the white race, Christianity, and our entire culture. If the Russians run away from the Japanese now,' he told his chancellor, von Bülow,' the yellow race will be in Moscow and Posen within twenty years.'[124] For Americans and British supporters of Japan, the awakening took only a little longer. Indeed, during the war numerous books and articles hailed the modern samurais for their bravery and civility, but at the end of it Japan became the core of the 'Yellow Peril' rather than a marginal actor as it had been in the decade prior to the war.[125]

The war was quick to ignite racial fears among white Americans in the west coast, where the Japanese were viewed through a domestic lens of economic competition rather than an international lens of military co-operation. One of the main arguments against Japanese immigration was based on racial differences. As the level of subsistence of the Japanese was much lower than that of whites, it was argued, only total exclusion of the Japanese could prevent them from outperforming the whites. In March 1905, the *Coast Seamen's Journal* opened a campaign against the continued admission of the Japanese with this argument, and in May the San Francisco *Chronicle* also used the divergent living standard to raise an alarm against the threat Japanese labourers posed to the American worker. In the summer of that year, the *Coast Seamen's Journal* went one step further, stating bluntly that the white race had never won a competition with the Oriental. Although physically and intellectually inferior,

[123] See Rotem Kowner, 'Becoming a honorary civilized nation: the Russo-Japanese War and Western perceptions of Japan' (forthcoming).

[124] von Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*, II, p. 72.

[125] See Richard Austin Thompson, 'The yellow peril, 1890–1924' (D.Phil. thesis, Wisconsin, 1957).

the yellow man, the article asserted, was better adapted to mechanized production and thus could outperform his white counterpart.[126]

The change in Western attitude toward the Japanese, it should be emphasized, was racial in character. Borrowing from Pierre van den Berghe's typology of race relations these attitudes, which started to evolve around the *fin de siècle* and especially after the end of the Russo–Japanese War, represented an abrupt but classic transformation from a 'paternalist' to a 'competitive' type of prejudice.[127] From a benevolent accommodation, a sense of confidence that the Japanese 'know their place', Westerners shifted their feelings toward the Japanese to antagonism, suspicion, and hatred. Stereotypes of the Japanese echoed the change promptly. Since 1905, the Japanese were not depicted any more as a childish, immature, fun-loving, and good-humoured people. Now they were perceived as aggressive, insolent, and even dangerous imperialists.

During the war, images of 'white' Ainu vanishing under the conquest of 'yellow' Japan were used as a prophetic warning. Frederick Starr, the American anthropologist who brought a group of nine Ainu members to the St Louis Exposition of 1904, found their physical characteristics, and especially white skin, to 'differ profoundly' from the 'yellow-brown' Japanese.[128] The Ainu, he declared,

> are surely a white people, not a yellow. They are more our brothers, though they live so far away, than brothers of the Japanese, to whom, in place, they are so near … We, white men, are fond of assuming an air of great superiority, when we speak of other peoples … Yet, here we find a *white race that has struggled and lost!* It has proved inferior in life's battle to the more active, energetic, progressive, yellow people, with which it has come in contact.[129]

On the other side of the Atlantic, the English journalist Thomas Crosland opened his book *The truth about Japan* with an unflattering portrait of 'the authentic dearly-beloved Little Jap': 'A stunted, lymphatic, yellow-faced heathen, with a mouthful of teeth three sizes too big for him, bulging slits where his eyes ought to be, blacking-brush hair, a foolish giggle, a cruel heart, and the conceit of the devil.'[130]

Thus, the evolution of Western racial attitudes toward the Japanese during the five decades since the opening of Japan was closely associated with contemporary Western racial worldview in general and the east Asian geopolitical situation in particular. At first, the late entrance of the Japanese into Western racial discourse and their perceived civilized character served to delay their depiction as an inferior people. Even later, at the zenith of Western racism, positive images of Japanese civilization and moral characteristics

[126] See *Coast Seamen's Journal*, 29 Mar. 1905; San Francisco *Chronicle*, 9 May 1905, 13 and 16 July 1905; *Coast Seamen's Journal*, 26 July 1905, 9 Aug. 1905.

[127] Pierre Van den Berghe, *Race and ethnicity* (New York, 1970), pp. 33–7.

[128] Frederick Starr, *The Ainu group at the Saint Louis exposition* (Chicago, 1904), pp. 107–8.

[129] Ibid., p. 110 (italic is in the original).

[130] Thomas William Hodgson Crosland, *The truth about Japan* (London, 1904), p. 1.

delayed their grouping with other 'coloured' races, and sustained the debate on their racial affinity well into the twentieth century. Still, there was a limit to the racial ambivalence toward the Japanese, especially since Japan was rapidly growing and the idea of race becoming unequivocal. Hence, within this relatively short period, the Japanese transformed in Western eyes from an almost unknown racial entity to a people Westerners perceived as a threat and a totally distinct race.

Finally, this exploration of the transformation of the Western racial view of the Japanese may facilitate the understanding of both the exotic and charming images of the Japanese in the mid-nineteenth century and their demonic images during the Pacific War.[131] It was race, at a time when it was an imprecise and deliberately vague concept, which helped many Westerners to see the Japanese in a positive light during the first decades after the opening of Japan. And it was race again, a quintessential and explosive concept in the 1940s, which made Westerners, predominantly Americans, seek the annihilation of the Japanese people toward the end of the war. Notwithstanding the differences between the two periods, race remained invariably a reflection of collective perceptions, motives, and emotions toward the Japanese, and at the same time a generator of readily usable categories that have affected attitudes and behaviour toward them.

[131] For the general image of Japan in the West during the latter half of the nineteenth century, see Lehmann, *The image of Japan*; Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian mind*; for a seminal account of the racial image of Japan during the Pacific War, see Dower, *War without mercy*.