

# **The Japanese Response to the Cry of the Yellow Peril during the Russo-Japanese War**

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## 日露戦争中の黄禍論の喧伝に対する日本側の対応

飯倉 章

19世紀末頃より西洋では、黄色人種の国家、なかでも中国と日本の勃興の脅威が「黄禍」論として声高に唱えられた。とくに黄色人種の国家日本と白人種の国家ロシアとの戦いであった日露戦争においては、「黄禍」の脅威をめぐって、国際論争が起こった。本稿は、「黄禍」の脅威を説く言説である「黄禍」論に対して、日露戦争中、当時の日本人がどのように反応したかを論じながら、その特徴を明らかにするものである。まずは、日本国内での反応、とくに森鷗外、島田三郎などの「黄禍」論に対する反駁を取り上げ、その内容を吟味する。ついで、海外における日本人の反論を雑誌や新聞を一次資料として明らかにする。当時の日本人は、日本を文明国としてアピールすることにより、この脅威論を払拭しようとしたが、同時にその反論は多分にナショナリズムを包摂することになった。また、日本は日露戦争を経て、文明国あるいは強国として西洋で認知されるようになるが、その評価には、好意的であってもなくても、異質性という特質が付与されることになった。

本稿における議論には、拙著『イエロー・ペリルの神話 帝国日本と「黄禍」の逆説』（彩流社、2004年）を始めとして、すでに日本語での諸論文で明らかにした内容も含まれている。また、本稿は2003年に脱稿しており、その原稿を基にして、ブルガリアの学術雑誌『戦争史論集』（2004年、第2号）で、ブルガリア語の翻訳が出版されている。その書誌情報は、以下の通りである。Акира ИИКУРА, “Японският отговор на идеята за жълтата заплаха по време на Руско-японската война”, военноисторически сборник, Военно издателство бр.2.2004  
また、その電子版は、[http://www.vi-books.com/vis/vis4\\_2/11.htm](http://www.vi-books.com/vis/vis4_2/11.htm)で見ることができる（2006年1月現在）。

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## 1. Introduction

The Yellow Peril was, in general, the idea that the rise of the yellow race was a danger to the white race. It can be defined specifically as an apprehension of the rise of yellow nations, especially the Chinese and Japanese, who, once emancipated from Western domination or influence and armed with modern weapons, would be able to wipe out the white man in the East and would be masters of the East or even of the world. This idea began to be advocated in the 1890s and became widespread at the beginning of the twentieth century in the white nations.

Since a war between Japan and Russia was considered to be inevitable, the propagation of the Yellow Peril on the Continent became turbulent. The Russian, French, and German Press brought up the Yellow Peril for discussion and attention in the form of Japanese leadership of Asia. They attempted to persuade the West that if Japan succeeded in controlling China, she would become the head of a Pan-Asiatic federation against the West and become a considerable menace. This view was put forward even more strongly after the outbreak of the war. Some writers wrote that the Japanese victory over Russia would make the Yellow Peril a reality. Against this view, English, American, and Japanese writers and politicians denied the possibility of the Yellow Peril in the form of Japanese leadership of Asia. Some of them tried to convince the world that it was Russia who would menace the world by controlling China. It is possible to say that this Slavic Peril was another form of the Yellow Peril. It may be admitted that the peril, no matter whether people believed in it or not, became one of the major points in dispute during the war.<sup>1</sup>

This essay attempts to examine the Japanese response to the Yellow Peril idea in this international controversy by making use of contemporary books, journals and newspapers. First, the Japanese reactions to the peril at home will be taken up. It was Mori Ōgai who refuted the idea adamantly during the war by publishing a book. It combined an expression of national pride with a denunciation of the idea. He showed his uneasiness with the apparent overestimation of the Chinese and denigration of the Japanese in one of the Yellow Peril theories. Contrary to Ōgai's reaction, the Japanese at home upheld the "golden silence" towards the Yellow Peril cry throughout the war. This essay also discusses how the Japanese abroad debunked the Yellow Peril idea in the Western Press. Not only the two emissaries sent to the West, Suyematsu Kenchō and Kaneko Kentarō, but also other Japanese abroad tried to demolish the Yellow Peril cry. Their arguments showed diverse facets of the cry and influenced the controversy itself. Although they attempted to refute the cry earnestly, their counter-arguments sometimes gave evidence to support the Yellow Perilists. Before and during the war, many people in Japan, the United States and Great Britain tried to refute the peril under the name of civilization. Yet what emerged after the war was, ironically, the image of Japan as a power which contained different elements from the

civilization of the West.

## 2. Japanese Reactions to the Yellow Peril Idea at Home

The Yellow Peril idea was received with contempt and despised by the contemporary Japanese. In November 1903, Mori Ōgai, the literary giant of the day, gave a lecture on it and tried to debunk it. Based on this lecture, his *Kōkaron Kōgai* (An Outline of the Yellow Peril Concept) was published in May 1904. His remarks seem to be worthy of being discussed because, due to being made before the Japanese at home, they were more straightforward and less apologetic than other contemporary Japanese refutations in the Western Press. In his book, he took up a German book titled *Die gelbe Gefahr als Moralproblem* (The Yellow Peril as a Moral Problem) by Hermann von Samson-Himmelstjerna and summarized it as impartially as he could. This was a review, but Ōgai's cutting remarks against the Yellow Peril and the German author can be found in its introduction and conclusion, and also sporadically in its text. As the lecture was given a few months before the war with Russia and the book was published three months after the outbreak of the war, more critical arguments can be found in this book.

At the beginning of his book, Ōgai stated the purpose of his summary as follows, "As you know, the words, the Yellow Peril, was coined through the struggles between the white and yellow races, and it expresses the feeling of the white towards the yellow race. I believe we should study this feeling in details." He gave an account of the reason of his belief that:

[we] have allied with England and tried to maintain the peace of the East. Except for our ally and the United States who has had much sympathy towards us for a long time, the white race in general lumps together the Japanese and other yellow peoples and looks at them with hatred and suspicion. Therefore, we cannot help being aware of the destiny that we should stand against the white race. If you are aware of this, the study of the so-called Yellow Peril is a reconnaissance of enemies. . . .<sup>2</sup>

After referring to the inevitable war with Russia, Ōgai predicted the outcome of the war in connection with the Yellow Peril. He asserted:

If this war is unfavorable to us, they, the white peoples, will triumph because they could suppress part of the Yellow Peril before its germination. If this war is favorable to us, it is a matter of course that they will try to reduce the prize of our victory and revive the Yellow Peril concept as the ultimate mean [to reduce the prize.] Therefore, is not the study of the Yellow Peril an urgent necessity?<sup>3</sup>

His comment told more than the purpose of his summary. First of all, Anglo-Saxons were regarded as an exception of the white race who were advocating the Yellow Peril. This was stated not only by Ōgai but by others like Shimada Saburō upon whom I shall touch later. Yet, the Anglo-Saxons were not necessarily an exception. For instance, a furious anti-Oriental feeling which tended to be associated with the Yellow Peril had existed in the United States from the late nineteenth century. So, why did Ōgai and the others exempt Anglo-Saxons from the white race who advocated the Yellow Peril? It is natural to guess that they did not want to stimulate latent Yellow Peril sentiments in the friendly Anglo-Saxon countries. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that in fact there was not a conspicuous rise in Yellow Peril propaganda in these countries in one or two years before the Russo-Japanese War.

The second point which his comment alluded to is his antagonism towards the white race. As he used the phrase "the destiny that we should stand against the white race," he seems to have been obsessed by the racial antagonism between the white and yellow races. Even he seems to have been engaged in agitation as shown by his warning; "if you do not know that you were insulted, how can you devise measures to prevent yourself from being insulted? First of all, people who are going to read this book [*Kōkaron Kōgai*] should remember this."<sup>4</sup>

The third point which is implied is the strong national pride which he shared. This national pride is the reverse side of the coin of racial antagonism. It seems to have covertly contained not only rivalry towards the white race, but also contempt towards the other yellow races. He emphasized that the white race except for Anglo-Saxons "lumped" together the Japanese and other yellow people. This shows his uneasiness with the apparent denigration of the Japanese as low as the other yellow races. He must have resented the inclusion of the Japanese in the "lower" yellow races.

His selection of this German book also contained some problems. He admitted that his outline dealt with only one of the Yellow Peril theories, but he asserted, "readers must be able to know what the Yellow Peril theories are by this outline."<sup>5</sup> He seems to have selected Samson-Himmelstjerna's book as a standard description of the Yellow Peril. However, it does not appear to be standard at all.

In this book, Samson-Himmelstjerna compared the two countries and two peoples from various points of view. To say nothing of her population and territory, according to the German author, China had a great advantage in her morality, mental ability, politics, education, agriculture, industry and civilization. Contrary to this, he declared, the Japanese were inferior to the Chinese in every respect. According to him, the Japanese did not have an ability to think; therefore they imitated Western technology. As they did not have an indigenous morality, they were materialist in a worst form. Their education was only for the elite. It was untrue, he asserted, that the Japanese

had a warlike disposition. The Japanese merchants were not trustworthy at all. Finally, he stated that the Japanese civilization was not one which they created but one which they learnt from Western civilization, although their learning was neither profound nor sufficient. Through a comparison of China and Japan, the author proved that China was a greater threat than Japan. Europe had already felt the danger from Japan, he thought, so if the Colossus China was awakened, the danger from her would be immeasurably greater.<sup>6</sup>

Although Samson-Himmelstjerna emphasized the danger from China, at the same time, he criticized aggressive European policies towards the yellow race and recommended Europeans to help China in order to prevent her from being encroached upon by other countries. The German author, as a scholar of ethics, stressed that Europe should learn from China, especially from her morality.<sup>7</sup>

It can be said that this higher evaluation of China was peculiar to Samson-Himmelstjerna's argument and is in sharp contrast to his lower evaluation of the Japanese. Ōgai seems to have been irritated by this contrast. He stated that the author "intentionally praised [China] to such an extent as to idealize." On the other hand, he felt that the author "intentionally underestimated [Japan], and found fault with her." Ōgai asserted that the author "must adore China and hate Japan."<sup>8</sup> He continued:

Then the reason why he hates Japan is that Japan is already an enemy. If I draw a caricature of this situation, the West, engaged in sumō-wrestling with Japan, glares at the great shadow of China and dreads it. Although the West started advocating the Yellow Peril from fear of Japan, it says that Japan is no longer a threat. Now it is only a shadow that China will become a threat. You will understand that the Yellow Peril theories are more or less nothing but a cowardly argument [of the West].<sup>9</sup>

Although Ōgai denied the existence of the Yellow Peril, he asserted that the West should be to blame if the Yellow Peril came into reality. He went so far as to say that "if the yellow race overcomes the white race, it will be a victory of the just and rightful." He continued with irony: "Had he [Samson-Himmelstjerna] better say the Yellow Hope rather than the Yellow Peril and gratefully adopt the so-called reforms which come from China?"<sup>10</sup> He declared that "I know that there is the White Peril in the world. Yet I do not know that there is a Yellow Peril."<sup>11</sup>

Ōgai pointed out some of the German author's misunderstandings of Japan. It may be true that the German author depended on non-credible sources and had some prejudice towards Japan. But, if it so, why did Ōgai select this book? It is true that some of the Yellow Perilists admired the Chinese and dreaded the Japanese. However, they were not so common and somewhat peculiar. He may have

understood this. Then, why did he introduce such a problematic Yellow Peril theory which diverged from the standard arguments of the Yellow Peril?

This question is not easy to answer. As the Yellow Perilists dealt with the possible threat from the East, they tended to emphasize the threat and to overestimate the latent ability of Orientals. The German author also praised China's potentialities. However, he dismissed Japan as being inferior to China. Contrary to this, Ōgai believed that the Japanese were superior to any other yellow races, not least the Chinese. Therefore, along with the assumed superiority of the white race, Ōgai seems to have been unable to endure this denigration of the Japanese. He tried to show the Japanese "how the white people hold us in contempt." At the same time, he covertly stimulated the national pride of the Japanese. It can be said that his outline may have given the contemporary Japanese a "biased" understanding of the Yellow Peril theories; that is, that the Yellow Perilists underestimated Japan.

This combination of national pride and a denunciation of Yellow Peril theories is not peculiar to Ōgai alone. Shimada Saburō, a liberal politician and journalist, published an article in the February and March 1904 issues of the *Chūōkōron*, under the caption "Kokumin no Soyō (The Ground of Nations)," and discussed the Yellow Peril ideas. In furnishing the article, he remarked on the alleged white superiority and racism and said, "People who judge only by the color of skin and who argue that as they [the Japanese] are an Oriental yellow race their rise is a peril to the human being, are extremely ignorant." At the same time, he asserted, "it is a great duty of the Japanese nation to the humanity to make the white race aware that beliefs in racial differences are an illusion." Furthermore, he described Japan as "the leader of the yellow race."<sup>12</sup>

It is not clear that to what extent Ōgai's outline and Shimada's article influenced the contemporary Japanese. However, at least, it can be said that their arguments reflected tensions in Japan in prior to the imminent war with Russia. Further, it may be possible to say that they also reflected the mood of the growing nationalism in Japan. Japanese nationalism first emerged as a reaction to rapid Westernization, and then emerged as an attempt to establish a Japanese identity. Now, it evolved as a need to convince the world of Japan's superiority.

Although there were such vocal criticisms towards the Yellow Peril in Japan, the Japanese at home responded to the "peril" calmly. A correspondent of *The Times* in Tokyo reported on the Japanese cool reaction to the peril in July 1904. He wrote, "Japanese publicists find difficulty in treating such a chimera seriously." He went on to say: "a racial conflict between Occident and Orient seems to them [the Japanese] a detestable and unthinkable outlook." The Japanese wisely kept their temper, but "If Europe insists upon excluding the Japanese from Occidental society," he warned, "they may ultimately be forced into acting the part now most unjustly and unwarrantably assigned to them: may be compelled to organize a yellow-race

resistance to this uncivilized ostracism." This article also quoted the remarks on the peril made by Japanese Premier Katsura. First, he said, "Japan's conduct during the Boxer trouble should protect her against such suspicions." Secondly, he mentioned, "precisely in order to keep China beyond the range of exciting factors, Japan had never ceased to impress upon her the expediency of observing strict neutrality."<sup>13</sup>

In the later stage of the war, the Japanese as a whole still kept cool. A correspondent of *The Times* in Tokyo highly valued the "golden silence of the Japanese" on the issue and said that the Japanese made no fuss about the Yellow Peril preachers and their doctrines. "They evidently think," he said, "that to bandy words would serve no useful purpose."<sup>14</sup> The golden silence, however, may well have been the result of the government restriction of the Press. The Japanese government apparently feared a vociferous movement against the foreigners in Japan because it would distort the relationship between Japan and Western countries. It may be possible to assume that an invented anti-Yellow Peril feeling in Japan, which often appeared in some form of xenophobia, became latent among the Japanese.

### **3. The Japanese Refutation of the Yellow Peril Idea in the Western Press**

Compared with the sarcastic remarks on the Yellow Peril presented by Mori Ōgai to the Japanese general public, the comments made by the Japanese abroad who tried to dissuade the West from believing in the Yellow Peril bogey were more discreet and somewhat apologetic. As soon as the Russo-Japanese War broke out, the Japanese government sent two emissaries, Suyematsu Kenchō and Kaneko Kentarō, to the West in order to create favorable feeling towards Japan. Suyematsu Kenchō, the son-in-law of Genrō (Oligarch) Itō Hirobumi, was sent to Europe, and Kaneko Kentarō, was sent to the United States.<sup>15</sup> What should be noted here is the fact that the major part of their mission was to prevent the outbreak of Yellow Peril feeling in Europe and America.<sup>16</sup>

The Japanese government was very much alert to the outbreak of the Yellow Peril cry. This alertness of the government was reflected in the instructions given to Suyematsu before his going to Europe. They stated, "since Yellow Peril feelings lie concealed in the thinking of Europeans and Americans and Russia is stirring them up everywhere, we must prevent a further outbreak." This passage of the instructions shows that the government was alert to the latent Yellow Peril even in Britain and the United States. Furthermore, they declared, "one of the important reasons why the Japanese government advised the Chinese government to remain strictly neutral was to prevent a fresh wave of Yellow Peril feeling."<sup>17</sup> It was clear that the Japanese government took the feeling seriously and dreaded the propagation of it. So, why was the government so alert to the outbreak of the cry?



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The major reason seems to have been its fear of the revival of the joint intervention by the Western Powers. The Triple Intervention after the Sino-Japanese War was a great humiliation for the government, and it was believed by the Japanese that one of the major reasons which justified this intervention was the Kaiser Wilhelm II's Yellow Peril idea. For example, "All you must know," wrote Shimada Saburō to Japanese readers of the *Chūōkōron*, "that Yellow Peril fear came into existence and helped the Triple Intervention."<sup>18</sup> Therefore, it is natural to assume that the government was extremely alert to the revival of the idea in order not to give an excuse for a new intervention. A memorandum on Suyematsu's mission which was written down by himself more explicitly showed the government concern about the Yellow Peril. It ordered, "you should do all efforts to refute the Yellow Peril doctrine and then protect Japan from a joint intervention by the European countries."

It is interesting to note that not only the two emissaries but also other diplomats, politicians, and even civilians were engaged in the refutation of the Yellow Peril idea. On February 18, when, the first furious propagation of the peril was brought out in the Continental Press, Kurino Shinichirō, the retiring Japanese Minister to Russia, denied the Japanese ambition to organize the Asiatic. Before leaving Berlin, he said, "I find commercial Germany exploiting the bugbear that if we humble Russia we shall proceed to slam the open door in the face of Europe and America and hoist the banner of Asia for the Asiatics. Japan has no such intention." The ex-Minister proceeded to say:<sup>19</sup>

The idea that Japan plans the organization of the Yellow race for the purpose of crushing white power in Asia is a ridiculous fantasy. Whoever permits himself to be frightened by the "yellow peril" is ignorant of the gulf separating the Japanese and the Chinese peoples.

Kurino, then, pointed out grounds for denying the peril as follows:

China, indeed, regards the Japanese as traditional enemies, and the attitude of China at this hour most disturbs Japan. I fear China will find it difficult to maintain internal order in the neighborhood of the fighting zone.<sup>20</sup>

Although his conviction that Chinese recognition of Japan as a traditional enemy seems to have been an exaggeration or overstatement, this article was carried in the front page of the *New York Times* and just above the article which reported the propagation of the Yellow Peril in Paris and might have had some impact on the public opinion in the United States.

The Japanese Minister to the United States, Kogorō Takahira, also attempted to debunk the idea in his article titled "Why Japan Resists Russia" in the March issue of

the *North American Review*. He denied the antagonism between the races and that between religions. He stated:

To thoughtful Japanese, there can be no greater cause for wonder that the conjecture whether their country's success may not be the precursor of a new alignment of races, Oriental on the one side, Caucasian on the other. To them it seems no more than a chimerical dream, a suggestion of memories of the age of Genghis Khan, impossible of achievement in these better days of intimate intercourse and mutual interdependence among all nations.<sup>21</sup>

Several Japanese opinions on the peril were also carried in the *New York Times*. In a letter to the editor of the newspaper, a letter from a Japanese Diet member to the contributor was cited. It said:

Just as the treaty revision and the abolition of extra-territoriality of jurisdiction have dispelled the temporary distemper of anti-foreignism . . . so will the friendly and brotherly feeling so universally manifested by the Anglo-Saxon peoples cure us of our narrow Asiatic feelings more than anything else. Nothing will so help to call up the "yellow peril" as the fear and cry of the "yellow peril" itself.<sup>22</sup>

There were many Japanese who tried to convince the West of the absurdity of the Yellow Peril, and the champion of these Japanese in the United States was Kaneko Kentarō. His opinion on the peril was introduced even before he arrived at the United States. The *New York Times* published his remarks in an article titled "Baron Kaneko on the Yellow Peril" in its issue of February 21, 1904. Alonzo H. Stewart, an interviewer and reporter of this article, declared at the beginning of the article, "the fear of the Yellow Peril lies only under the white mantle of Russia. This was dominant idea impressed upon me as the result of an afternoon's visit with Baron Kaneko. . . ." Although the reporter said as much on the subject, the article dwelled on Kaneko's criticism of Russian action in China rather than refutation of the peril. Kaneko emphasized the importance of the policy of the "open door" and the integrity of the Chinese Empire and asserted that Russian dominance of China would be a menace not only for Asia but also for Europe. It is interesting to note that, in spite of his real intention, his assertion on the Japanese ascendancy on Chinese education seems to have given evidence to support the Yellow Perilists. For instance, on the issue of the education of the Chinese, he said, "it is only by the education of the Chinese in the modern ways of civilization that the integrity of China can be preserved and who better than Japan can be her teacher?" He stated, "the Chinese students in our military colleges seem to learn the modern military tactics quicker and better through us than they do in Continental Europe."<sup>23</sup>

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Kaneko had a lot of chances to express his views on the war and tried to refute the Yellow Peril idea, but his opinion is likely to have been distorted by the American Press. At the same time, however, it may be that his opinions had a degree of inconsistency.

In an article in the *New York Times* titled "Says Asia's Salvation is Stake of the War," he said:

If we fail . . . the work of fifty years, the struggle for enlightenment, the commercial relations with the whole world will be utterly destroyed and the hope of the awakening to better things of Asia be gone. There are other peoples would follow in the footsteps of victorious Japan — Japan who has so worthily tried to be one of the proud civilized nations of the world.

This message along with the title might have given the impression to readers that Japan claimed to be the leader of Asia. To refute the Yellow Peril, he stated:

As to the "yellow peril," Kublai Khan of China 500 years ago invaded Europe and Japan. The latter suffered most. We have again and again fought the "yellow peril," and we have been menaced by the "white peril."<sup>24</sup>

It is an exaggeration that Japan suffered more than Europe by the Mongolian invasion. And his mentioning on the White Peril might have been taken as the strong criticism of the West including the United States.

His refutation of the peril would be best represented by his article in the *North American Review* titled "The Yellow Peril is the Golden Opportunity for Japan." In this article, Kaneko regarded the cry of "Asia for the Asiatics" as the natural outcome. He asked why Asiatics should not assert the principle of "Asia for Asiatics." He, then, went on to say, "if there is a peril in the East, it is not the 'Yellow Peril,' but the 'White Peril'; the former being a mere myth, while the latter is an actual reality."<sup>25</sup>

What is peculiar to his argument was his strong belief in power and his national pride. He regarded the cry of the Yellow Peril as a recognition of Japan as a great Power. He stated:

[A] nation, in order to maintain her independent position in the midst of international rivalries, must command sources of power which will inspire other nations, not simply with respect, but with fear. This fear is an evidence of such power in the nation feared, and that power, further, may justly or unjustly be regarded as a potential peril. Therefore, the cry of "Yellow Peril" is a recognition by the Western nations that Japan has at last attained her long-sought-for rank among the great Powers.<sup>26</sup>

From the Yellow Perilist point of view, this passage seems to have been more provocative than persuasive. So, he had to say that the Japanese aim was “to introduce to the distant and long-neglected East the blessings of Western civilisation.” In concluding his article, he stated that “the alarm about a ‘Yellow Peril’ ” took on the character of “a golden opportunity for Europe and America to become acquainted with the real strength and ambitions of Japan.” He continued, “the same cry, moreover, intended to work us injury and disgrace, provides Japan with a golden opportunity to show the world that selfish ambition has no part in the aspirations of her people.”<sup>27</sup>

It has been said that Kaneko’s article attracted attention from the American public and the periodicals all over the United States which reviewed it were of the opinion that the theory of the peril had been effectively refuted.<sup>28</sup> It is difficult, however, to evaluate to what extent Kaneko and the others succeeded in convincing the American public of the absurdity of the Yellow Peril idea. Even if there was a favorable change in the attitude of the American public toward Japan, it is difficult to attribute this only to the efforts of Kaneko and other Japanese. It should be pointed out, however, that the Japanese response towards the peril revealed diverse facets of the idea and made some impact on the controversy itself.

As a whole, arguments on the peril in the United States were not so scholarly and consistent as they were in Europe. The refutations of it in America were also conducted not in academic terms but on more political and practical levels. In Europe, Suyematsu stirred up a series of scholarly discussions, and the Japanese views on the subject were publicized in *The Times* and other periodicals.

In the May issue of the *Fortnightly Review*, Alfred Stead referred to the Russian and Continental exaggeration of the peril and tried to refute it by quoting from many Japanese sources. According to his article, ōkuma Shigenobu, the leader of the opposition party, Kensei Hontō, at that time, believed that the real Yellow Peril lay among the Mongol under Russian dominance. Shimada Saburō, also quoted in the article, believed that Japan would play the part of the savior of the Orientals if they were to rise again. He stated, “our ambition is not to oppose the white people, but to raise the position of the degenerate humanity in the Orient to its original splendour.” Stead himself criticized the idea and asked if it would “not appear likely that Japan, with all her intimate knowledge of the past and present of China, should be a safer guide than Russia.”<sup>29</sup>

Hayashi Tadasu, Japanese Minister to London, also endeavored to deny the peril. His letter dated October 1904 to a writer, later cited in an article in the *Nineteenth Century and After*, emphasized the march of civilization as the ground for his refutation of the peril. He wrote:

According to the theory of Yellow Peril, the Orientals become dangerous to the Occidentals when they get civilised; but I utterly fail to see how it should be, for if

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the Asiatic peoples become civilised the Europeans have only to regard them as their equals in the East, just as they have their equals everywhere in Europe and America. Civilisation enlightens people irrespective of race and color, and the East civilised means an extension of the community of the civilised world.<sup>30</sup>

Various Japanese views were given prominence in the European Press so as to prove and amplify the absurdity of the Yellow Peril. It was Suyematsu Kenchō who most vigorously tried to dispel the peril in Europe. As soon as he arrived in Britain in March 1904, his view on the peril was given wide publicity by Reuter's representative. Suyematsu was reported to have said:

What is called the yellow peril seems to me to be a kind of nightmare. . . . our efforts have been directed to assimilating European ideas and European modern civilization and to eradication of race feelings. In other words we have sought to make brotherhood with Occidentals and to adopt their modes of thought and reason.<sup>31</sup>

Although the British Press as a whole inclined favorably towards Japan, a certain section of the Press was as much critical of Japan as of Russia, with the *Review of Reviews* taking the lead. Thus, its special interview with Suyematsu appeared in the issue of July 1904 and provided an interesting debate on the subject.

First, Suyematsu asked the interviewer what the meaning of the Yellow Peril was. The interviewer answered, "Japan, if victorious, will Japanese [sic for Japanese] China, and the four hundred millions of Chinese, organized and drilled by Japan, would declare for Asia for the Asiatics, and where would Europe be then?" Suyematsu replied quickly, "That assumes that we are Asiatics . . . and that because Japan can organize the Japanese she can organize Asiatics. But it does not follow." He went on to say, "Neither is it to be assumed that because Japan can equip victorious fleets and armies Asiatic nations can do the same." He, then, compared Japan with Asiatic nations, not least China. He stated:

"They are distinct from us, and the Chinese are very distinct. They are of different race. We are warlike, they are most peaceful of men. We have an intense pride in our nationality; with them patriotism in our sense is unknown. They have never conquered anybody. They only ask to be let alone."

"But Genghis Khan — ," the interviewer could not help interrupting him. "[He] was not a Chinese," Suyematsu replied and added, "It is Russia rather than Japan who is the heir of the great Tartar conqueror. He plundered and conquered the Chinese."<sup>32</sup> If the interviewer had had any knowledge of Suyematsu's early work written in

English, he would have become more informative and even exciting. Suyematsu wrote a book on the identity of Genghis Khan, in which he made the curious assertion that Khan was, in fact, the popular Japanese hero Minamoto no Yoshitsune.<sup>33</sup>

The main theme of Suyematsu's repudiation of the Yellow Peril was unmistakably clear. As a Sinologist he emphasized the ineptitude of the Chinese for war, and tried to prove that the peril was nothing but a chimera. He made a number of speeches and published many articles in Europe, of which a speech he made at the Central Asian Society in London in January 1905 can be regarded as the most energetic and lengthy refutation of the peril. The text of the speech was later published in his book *The Risen Sun*.

In this speech titled "Chinese Expansion Historically Reviewed," Suyematsu expounded the Chinese history and Chinese character. He insisted that the expansion of China had not been the result of aggressive conquests. He added that "China has always been on the defensive," and "the conquests China has made have in reality been the effect of the influence of her civilization." He described the basic principle of Chinese civilization as being essentially pacific, and pointed out that the limits of the Chinese expansion had been reached. "China has not been," he believed, "and is not of her own seeking an aggressive nation." Therefore, he regarded the Yellow Peril as "nothing more than a senseless and mischievous agitation." He asked, "How can China rise up alone, and become a source of peril . . . to the rest of mankind?"<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, Suyematsu denied the probability of a Pan-Asiatic Peril under Japanese leadership, and said:

Peace-loving as the Japanese also are, the characteristics, notions, and feelings of the Japanese and Chinese are so different that there is no possibility of their complete amalgamation in one common cause; and what is true with regard to the Chinese holds even more true with regard to other Asiatic peoples.

Japan aspires, moreover, to elevate herself to the same plane and to press onward in the same path of civilization as the countries of the West.

He then set forth the reason why in his opinion the peril was not probable. He asked:

Can anyone imagine that Japan would like to organize a Pan-Asiatic agitation of her own seeking, in which she must take so many different peoples of Asia into her confidence and company . . . ? And what of the risks Japan would wantonly incur were she dare to attempt such an enterprise in the face of the most powerful nations of the earth?

And he added that “the conditions of existence throughout the whole world” were totally different from the age of Genghis Khan or Timur. He asserted, “Japan has already cast in her lot with the Occident, and in the eyes of many Asiatics it is to be remembered the Japanese are no less ‘Yang-Kwai’ (foreign devils) than the Occidentals.”<sup>35</sup>

Although Suyematsu and others denied the probability of the Yellow Peril, the idea of a Pan-Asiatic Peril, which was sometimes regarded as a type of Yellow Peril idea, was later revived in Japanese Pan-Asianism. This was, perhaps, the irony of history.

A voice against the peril was also heard from Japan. The *Japan Weekly Chronicle* published an English article written by Kanzō Uchimura, the “independent” Christian and anti-war activist, in March 1904. In this article titled “Foreign Policy of Japan Historically Considered,” Uchimura asserted, “*Japan as a leader of the East, should never aim at the Orientalisation of the world.* The Turk did this, . . . he is now ‘the Sick Man of the East’.” On the peril, he stated:

The so-called “Yellow Peril” now entertained by the European nations is due to the fear that Japan might play the role of Turkey on a much more gigantic scale. . . . But herein lies Japan’s responsibility and need of noble self-restraint. She being a careful guardian of the East, should allow no encroachment upon it by another and barbaric Power, but she being a bringer-in of European civilisation, should never array herself and her protégé against the civilisation that is the life of mankind. Not the Orientalisation of the world through the accentuation of the Orientalism of the East, but the Occidentalisation of the East by keeping, “the European-Chinese with and without pigtailed [pseudo-Europeans, implying the Russian.]” out of it, — that should be Japan’s one unfaltering aim.<sup>36</sup>

Uchimura also seems to have believed that the peril was antonym of Western civilization. There were some Japanese, who believed in the superiority of Western civilization and regarded the peril as inherent in Eastern civilization. Here we can observe strong and somewhat optimistic belief in Western civilization of some Japanese. For them, the Yellow Peril was nothing but an unsavory slogan.

#### 4. Conclusion

During the Russo-Japanese War, the Yellow Peril fears appeared on the Continent again and again. What was peculiar to this period is the transformation of the fear from the Yellow Peril in the form of Russian or Japanese leadership to that in the form of Japanese leadership alone. As the “unexpected” Japanese victories piled up, more and more people began expressing uneasiness over the Japanese victories. And the

voice of the Yellow Peril in the form of Japanese leadership became stronger even in the United States and in some sections of Great Britain.

As we have seen, Japanese writers and politicians had been “excessively” alert to the Yellow Peril idea. Therefore, not only the two emissaries to the West but also other statesmen, writers, and civilians referred to the “alleged” Yellow Peril in the form of Japanese leadership, and tried to convince world opinion that Japan had no intention to make it a reality.

Yet, ironically enough, their refutations sometimes contained a strong element of nationalism. Ōgai’s arguments can best be described as examples of this. He believed, as the potential of China was overestimated, so the power of Japan was underestimated in one of the Yellow Peril theories. Therefore, when he denied the idea, he showed discomfort with the apparent denigration of the Japanese and their placement at the same level as other yellow races.

It is more interesting to note that Japanese writers and politicians debunked the Yellow Peril idea mainly in terms of the “civilization” point of view. “Civilization”, which means Western civilization, at that time was considered to be the major ground for the refutation of the peril. Some of the anti-Yellow Perilists compared Russia, China, and Japan, emphasized the “semi-civilized” nature of Russia and peaceful disposition of China, and praised Japan as the representative of Western civilization.

After the Russo-Japanese War, however, Japan began to be regarded as a power of a different civilization. It is obvious that the Yellow Peril idea and similar theories contained a strong belief that Japan was different from the West even though she looked similar in appearance. And even among the positive images of Japan, a tendency to emphasize the heterogeneity between Japan and the West began to be witnessed. As soon as the Russo-Japanese War had come to an end with the signing of the peace treaty at Portsmouth, *The Times* wrote on the peril in its editorial titled “The Peace,” as if it put an end to the long controversy over the Yellow Peril. It stated, “We have constantly treated with the scorn which it deserves the cry of the ‘Yellow Peril’ in every shape and form.” Yet this editorial went on to say as follows.

We have never doubted at the same time that the rise of a nation whose civilization contains many elements which differ profoundly from those that go to make up the civilization of the West must exercise a new and powerful influence on the mind of the West as well as on the mind of East.<sup>37</sup>

In this passage, the newspaper suggested that Japanese civilization was somewhat different from Western civilization. Compared with its early efforts to describe Japan as the “civilized” Power and as the representative of Western civilization, *The Times* here, no doubt, tried to differentiate the two heterogeneous civilizations. Now that Russia was defeated, the Western Press began to focus on the “difference” between



Japan and the West, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. In the same editorial, *The Times* sought the reason for rise in the culture of groupism in Japan. It stated, "The great end of all Japanese training has been the subordination of the individual to the family, the tribe, and the State." The newspaper highly evaluated the group culture of Japan and stated, "This doctrine of devotion to the good of others is one which may well prove a useful corrective to the excessive individualism into which Western civilization sometimes shows a tendency to degenerate." Nowadays this comparison between Japanese groupism and Western individualism is a familiar subject in *Nihonjinron* (Theories on Japan). But in the early twentieth century, it seems to have been a novel topic. It was the heyday of Western individualism. Groupism sometimes suggested the backward state of Asian societies and the image of faceless hordes of Asian people, which permeated in the theory of the Yellow Peril. Although *The Times* at that time felt favorably towards Japanese groupism, it was redefined later in a new negative form, that was totalitarianism and fascism. Then, a similar fear of the Yellow Peril, in a sense, came into reality in the United States and Great Britain who had once debunked the peril in earnest.

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