

# Fearing the Other: The Danger of a “Yellow” Invasion Between 19th and 20th century in Europe

Vincenza Cinzia Capristo, Researcher  
University of Naples, Italy

## Abstract

This article starts from the European misgivings, founded or not, about a foreign invasion. It underlines how this fear has always been present in the old continent and how it can be observed from a different point of view. In fact this short essay deals with the fear of “yellow people” in Europe between 1800 and 1900 and with the role played in influencing Europeans’ imaginary and fears by missionaries and war correspondents in the Far East. History that should be *magistra vitae* ends up being a lesson we never learn.

The main events analyzed in this paper are the Boxer rebellion and the Russian-Japanese war.

**Keywords:** yellow invasion; Boxer rebellion; Russian-Japanese war; human rights, Europe.

## Introduction

Nowadays, Europe fears the invasion of foreigners coming from countries with different tradition, culture and religion<sup>1</sup>. This fear sends us back to a colonial past where the major European countries were protagonists on the international scene: “*historical courses and recourses*” as Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) said.

At the beginning of the third millennium whilst Europe redraws its borders and shows all its fragility, the fundamental human rights are constantly recalled to support the idea of a globalized world, however their universalism is questioned in many terms. The Declarations of Rights and the National Constitutions should have reflected the idea of a culturally homogeneous population. All human beings are equally entitled to Universal Rights but inside our societies there are too many limits, arising from European history and culture, that makes almost impossible for everybody in the world, at every different levels of social relations (individual, familiar and non-secularized community), to really enjoy benefits of this Right. In the Preamble of the 1948 Declaration it is clear that a common feeling towards the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is of utmost importance to guarantee their respect. However, since the beginning, the process of internationalization of the rights highlighted the gap between their universalism and the particularism of each culture. The same

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<sup>1</sup> Todorov, Tzvetan (2009), *La paura dei barbari: oltre lo scontro di civiltà*, Garzanti Libri s.p.a., Milano.

gap stands behind the conflicts emerged at the United Nations Conference of 1993 and within the western societies already multiethnic but not equally multicultural. The World Conference on Human Rights: «considers the elimination of the racism and of any racial discrimination, especially in their institutionalized forms such as apartheid, the doctrines on superiority and racial exclusivity or the current forms of racism, a primary aim for the international community and for a global program of promotion of the human rights»<sup>2</sup>. However, even if all the efforts for a common program have highlighted an increasing disparity, we are going in the direction to rise the Center for Human Rights as a universal light, putting pressure on the governments. Anthropology had already shown the practical and theoretical difficulties related to the universal rights as well as their being absent in non-European cultures. The same application of rights is influenced, in many cases, by the coexistence with religious and consuetudinary rights, which are based on a vision of family and social relations different from what has been established in the International Declarations<sup>3</sup>. It is the human rights' foundation itself to be questioned, especially if one thinks of the Asian system of values based on people socialization and community participation: on duties rather than rights. At the roots of the ineffectiveness of human rights there are not only economic reasons and political choices, but their inadequacy to specific and particular contexts, even if many countries are moving towards a greater awareness of human rights. China has given a strong signal regarding in occasion of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' sixtieth anniversary, when 303 Chinese intellectuals and activists signed the "Charter 08" launched by the Nobel Peace Prize Liu Xiaobo (1955-2017) to promote the human rights: «China, one of the world's largest powers, one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, should contribute to make peace for all humanity and to progress towards the protection of human rights [...]. Our political system continues to produce tragedies in the field of human rights and social crises that not only restrain the development of the country but also limit the progress of civilization in all areas»<sup>4</sup>, an obvious sign that China also takes a step towards a subject that unifies peoples rather than divide them.

### **Fearing the other: the yellow people**

In a time that may seem far away, the danger that some peoples, in this case Asian community, could invade Europe and subvert its values, culture and life system has been repeatedly feared since the era of Arab-Islamic expansion in the Iberian Peninsula, lived by a part of Christianity as an invasion. Subsequently, the perception of danger arose from Mongol invasions; in fact, the first papal missions and embassies

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<sup>2</sup> Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, part B. Equality, dignity and tolerance, <http://www.uniric.org>.

<sup>3</sup> Facchi Alessandra (2007): 145-148.

<sup>4</sup> Charta 08 –la sfida online per la democrazia in Cina-Tecnologia-Repubblica.it (29 gennaio 2009).

were sent to the East to stem this danger<sup>5</sup>. Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, two events involving the major powers of the Far East – the Boxer rebellion in China and the Russian-Japanese war – led Europeans to look at the Far East as a new source of danger. Starting from the first event we try demonstrate how the fear of the other led the European Powers, which have traditionally been rivals, to join forces to fight the common enemy. The news reported with emphasis by the international press and partly confirmed by the missionaries' correspondence contributed to spread further concern in Europe<sup>6</sup>. From 1860 onwards, Western Powers relationships with China have weaved together, even if the perception of a possible "yellow danger" was different from State to State and it was perceived in different periods<sup>7</sup>. England was the first in feeling this danger, followed by France at a later stage. The former leant on a Protestant mission whilst the latter took advantage of the Catholic mission in order to stem British imperialism establishing a sort of Protectorate, not only in China but in all Far East<sup>8</sup>. At this time French commerce were much less important than the British one. Therefore, the influence the states exercised on the missionary work in the Far East was a way to affirm their supremacy in the area whilst for both Catholic Church and Christianity the missions represented one of their main strong points. The Church itself was perceived at the same time as a risk because of its being a vehicle of new ideas but also something positive because through its press and pamphlets, contributed to increase the knowledge among the Europeans of Asiatic customs and traditions. In fact, when we talk about "yellow danger" we need to consider how the information of the missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, arrived in Europe from China and Far East, affected the construction of an imaginary danger strongly influencing the public opinion<sup>9</sup>. The problems of relations between Europeans and Asians were insurmountable because the starting perspectives were different. We could say that at first, when the missionaries arrived in the Far East, a relationship of vague reciprocity between the two worlds came to being somehow possible moving from the European perspective to the Eastern one, limiting the actions and interests of a party that could be a prevent to the actions of the other; in this way the sphere of action of each one was reduced so that the obstacle were not be represented by the constraints posed by traditions and social norms, because they were somehow easily overcome. There was a limit to one's vision, which meant to have a criterion of impartiality, in a way that one could consider non-European interests like the

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<sup>5</sup> Loewe, Michael (1988): 179-212. Sella, Pacifico (2008).

<sup>6</sup> Doniselli Eramo Isabella (2011): 33-54.

<sup>7</sup> Giovannini, Fabio (2011). Since the beginning of the Westerners trade with China, the balance of payments was pending against the Westerners. A solution to the problem had been found with the export of opium to China, a drug that Britain had begun to produce in massive quantities in India. In China the opium trade had increased significantly becoming in the nineteenth century the most important and lucrative activity in spite of the several bans of the Chinese authorities that had prohibited the opium import and commerce from 1729 onwards. The smuggling of opium was not only an economic problem for China, it also became a matter of public order in the long run. Bertuccioli, Giuliano – Masini, Federico (1996): 229-230.

<sup>8</sup> Bays D.H. (2012):5, 93 e ss.

<sup>9</sup> Pezzini, Isabella (1985): 238-260; Zuanelli, Luigi (1911): 1-39.

European ones, so it was necessary to meet the other person, seeing hearing and listening to him. Therefore, it was necessary to rely on the word as an instrument and enter into a situation of dialogue; the human dignity became status in this way, in order to understand the limit of one side's action, that is the western one towards the eastern part<sup>10</sup>, identified in this case in the difficulty of the language.

### **Concessions and “Unequal Treaties” in China**

The political relationships between the major European powers and China before 1900 are crowned by a series of treaties called “Unequal”<sup>11</sup>. Far East and Europe got back to relate to each other between 1839 and 1842 after a period of stagnation; it happens during the First Opium War when United Kingdom' attempt to stop the opium trafficking did start a war against the Qing Empire<sup>12</sup>. In 1842 following extremely short negotiations, the belligerents signed the Treaty of Nanjing<sup>13</sup>, it was ratified in Hong Kong next year and led to commercial granting and the transfer of some Chinese territories to the United Kingdom. With the treaty of “Bogue”<sup>14</sup> the principle of extraterritoriality for the British subjects was established in the five open ports (Canton, Amoy, Ningbo, Shanghai and Fuzhou) and was introduced the so-called “most favoured Nation Clause”. With the “Unequal Treaties”, the foreign Powers not only granted the domicile to their subjects in the five open ports, but they authorized the construction of churches, hospitals, schools and cemeteries, in addition to obtain the freedom for their missionaries to evangelize; while on the Chinese side the freedom to convert themselves, initially, was reserved only to those who dwelt in the five ports and then extended to those who lived in inland regions. On July 3th 1844 the same concessions contained in the Bogue Treaty were accorded to the Americans with the Treaty of Wangxia, and extended to the French citizens on October 24th of the same year, with the Treaty of Huangpu<sup>15</sup>.

The treaty of Wangxia openly granted extraterritoriality and encourage western trades along the Asian coasts. In addition, only the French Treaty obtained the inclusion of a note which authorized Catholic missionaries to carry out their ministry in China, which is a clear sign of the importance recognized to the missionary role in the management of the European states' affairs. Because of the “most-favored-Nation Clause” the above mentioned chance was extended automatically to Britons and Protestant missionaries. With the treaty of Huangpu the Ambassador Melchior Marie Joseph Théodore De Lagrené (1800-1862) obtained the permission for French citizens to build and run

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<sup>10</sup> La Torre, Massimo (2004): 99-116.

<sup>11</sup> Wang, Dong (2005). Caputo, Federica (2011); Bays D.H. (2012).

<sup>12</sup> Bertuccioli, Giuliano – Masini, Federico (1996): 229-230.

<sup>13</sup> Borsa, Giorgio (1977): 177-240; Gernet, Jacques (1982).

<sup>14</sup> Borsa (1977): 503; Fang, Francesco (1946): 42.

<sup>15</sup> Tiedemann, R.G. (ed. by) (2010): 222 s.

worship buildings in the five open ports as well as to acquire lands from the Chinese for this purpose; nevertheless, France did not guarantee a generalized and exclusive right of protection to Catholic missions until the end of the Opium War, when France endorsed it as a right-duty to protect Catholic Missions within the Empire<sup>16</sup> every time it were necessary. Upon request of the French Envoy De Lagrené, on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1845 Chinese Christians were entitled the possibility to practice their beliefs freely abrogating implicitly in this way the bans reiterated by previous emperors. Furthermore, under the pressure of French diplomat, the Emperor Daoquang (1782-1850) signed an Edict, where he declared Christianity a religion with positive ethical aims, relieving Christians from the political pressures they had suffered in the previous years.

This first recognition of rights would have led Christians to obtain further concessions and did open the way to a series of issues related to evangelization. Only some of the foreign Legations were based in the capital city at the beginning, but it was only after the Second Opium War that all the diplomatic representations could move to the imperial capital<sup>17</sup>, thus benefiting the Europeans and subtracting that negotiating role of the Chinese government's foreign policy. In 1854 the Imperial Customs for imported goods were founded. However, because of Chinese powerlessness, European consuls had to take care of them, reason why a temporary office was established in Shanghai, and then in Beijing, before a General Direction was set up under the European guide with the support of the Chinese government. After 1850 China new political order disappointed both Westerners and Qing authorities. A strong xenophobic sentiment spread throughout the country towards the Manchu dynasty and the European foreigners<sup>18</sup>. The sect of the Taiping (Great Peace), riding the xenophobic wave, between 1850 and 1864 sieged and then took over several provinces of the Empire. The Taiping directed their army to the North only after the conquest of the ancient capital Nanjing. One of the points of this movement was the rebirth of religious fervor, based on a new conception of Christianity with primitive and messianic contents, which reflected the Chinese rural society. The Manchu dynasty was unable to resist Taiping' assaults; a leading to resentment on the French and English side, especially when on May 20th 1858 in Tagu, the Taiping opened fire against the Anglo-French fleet and the

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<sup>16</sup> Melis, Giorgio (1990): 311-317.

<sup>17</sup> For an overview of the Italian legation, see: Romagnoli, Chiara (2010/2011), *Le sedi dell'Ambasciata italiana a Pechino*, in «Sulla via del Catai», Pechino chiama Roma Quarant'anni di relazioni diplomatiche tra Italia e Cina (a cura di Chiara Romagnoli), numero speciale per il Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Centro Studi Martino Martini, Dicembre 2010 (2011), Anno IV, n. 5: 93-101. In June 1900 the Diplomatic Corps in Beijing were composed by representatives of the eleven Powers: for Spain Mr. Bernardo Giacinto De Cologan, Minister Plenipotentiary, Dean; for Germany Baron Ketteler Minister Plenipotentiary, after his death replaced by Mr. Claus von Below-Saleske; for France Sig Pichon Minister Plenipotentiary; for England Mr. Claude Mac Donald Minister Plenipotentiary; for Italy Marchese Salvago Raggi Minister Plenipotentiary, Mr. Livio Gaetani of the Dukes of Sermoneta Secretary, Mr. Guido Vitale interpreter (absent); for Belgium Mr. Maurizio Joostens Minister Plenipotentiary; for Austria Mr. Arturo von Rosthorn, Chargé d'Affaires in the absence of the holder Mr. Czikan von Wahlborn, Minister Plenipotentiary; for the United States Edwin Conger, Minister Plenipotentiary; for Japan Baron Niski, Minister Plenipotentiary; for the Netherlands Mr. F. M. Knobel Minister Plenipotentiary; for Russia Mr. Michele De Giers, Minister Plenipotentiary. Valli, Mario (1905): 433.

<sup>18</sup> Crotti, Amelio (1962): 7-8.

Plenipotentiaries, who were there to ratify the treaty of Tianjin; two European powers found themselves in the position to fight at the same time on two fronts: the internal and the external one<sup>19</sup>. Missionaries and diplomats were particularly interested in the movement of Taiping because the Christianity professed by the rebels was seen as an encouraging sign to foster more relaxed relationships between Eastern and Western Powers. However, after 1860 the Europeans, aware of the rebels' intentions, provided their support to China in order to fight the movement.

### **Change of course and crisis of the Manchu Empire**

Eastern openness to the missionaries was destined to change. From oppressed the missionaries became oppressors, vanguards and allies of the Western Powers and their interests were intertwined with European colonial ones taking shelter behind the Church to impose their model of society in the empire, now in crisis. On June 27, 1858 - two years later the outbreak of the Second Opium War<sup>20</sup> - the Treaty of Tianjin was signed. Through a specific clause included in the treaty, France achieved the recognition of the right of protection, to be exercised by their authorities, in favor of both Protestant and Catholic missionaries. Thanks to this clause the Catholic missionary congregations and orders were allowed to appeal directly the French diplomatic and consular institutes in case of legal dispute with Chinese and Manchu authorities.

On October 25<sup>th</sup> 1860, with the Beijing Convention, the so-called passport issue was reexamined and the rules of all missionaries were fixed<sup>21</sup> and allowed these to move within the Chinese territory. In the same years when the Taiping rebellion raged on in the south of the country, the Western Powers pledged to consolidate the economic and commercial benefits deriving from the signing the Nanjing treaty, resorting to military force whenever the Manchu government of Beijing appeared reluctant to accept their requests. In 1858, *manu militari*, the Qing agreed to sign treaties with Russia, United States, Great Britain and France and later questioned them accepting worse and more humiliating conditions as a consequence<sup>22</sup>. If after the Second Opium War it was still possible to discuss in China how to stem the Western Powers, after 1860 it seemed necessary to find a check and balance system in order to live with foreigners; however, the forced opening to foreign trade ended with the surrender of the empire, leaving a strong discontent, which influenced negatively the recovery of the entire missionary work. The year 1860 marked the peak Manchu Empire's height of the crisis and highlighted the Western interests in securing its position and the concessions already obtained in the area. The defeat of the Qing Empire in the Opium

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<sup>19</sup> Valli, Mario (1905):177-184.

<sup>20</sup> Wei Tsing-Sing, Louis (1960).

<sup>21</sup> Conforti, Guido M. (1988): 76-77; Capristo, Vincenza C. (2001): 73.

<sup>22</sup> Latourette, Kenneth S. (1929): 3 voll.

Wars (1839-1860) had negative consequences for China, always surrounded by an aura of fascination and mystery, considered by the West as a solid and unassailable Empire<sup>23</sup>.

In the decade between 1860 and 1870, a strong anti-Christian movement spread in the major urban centers with demonstrations and pamphlets' distribution. The anti-Western hostility that was breathed in the country ended up, as a result, to turn into hostility also towards Catholic missionaries accused of collusion with foreigners and of stirring up the social order. These accusations led to attacks against the Chinese converts and against the orphanages which were created and generally run by Catholic missionaries. All of this were indirectly fueled by France, which with the treaties of 1842 and 1856-60 had claimed the protection of all Catholic Missions. It was perceived, by the foreign Powers, a lack of interest of the Sino-Manchu authorities in countering the xenophobic attacks that culminated, in June 21th, 1870, in the Tianjin massacre, when a Lazarist Mission was attacked and destroyed. Meanwhile, between 1888 and 1890 a further step was made by the rebels along the Yangtzi Valley<sup>24</sup>.

Moreover, until 1880 France thanks to the institute of the Protectorate, could exercise a huge political influence over China affairs<sup>25</sup> and protecting all the Catholic Missions in this way. This right tacitly granted was undermined by some nations, in particular Germany and Italy, that put pressure on both the Vatican and China in order to change the situation. The two countries claimed for them the right to issue passports and to exercise protection on their citizens without distinction and without sanctioning any violations<sup>26</sup>. The acquiescence of the missionaries to the French and foreign "protection" regime was due to a marked "colonial mentality" typical of the process of traditional evangelization in other word, a process of acculturation<sup>27</sup>.

## The Boxer War

The Boxer rebellion' early signs date back to the Opium War and the European penetration in Asia. In the name of the freedom of trade and the diplomatic relations parity principle, European public opinion tolerated all the infractions committed by the English as well as by other Europeans and Americans. The events of the Boxer war refer, then, to the Opium wars followed by the "Unequal" Treaties. The uprising broke out in the Northern provinces of China where the masses of peasants expressed their discontent for the Japanese expansionism and the privileges granted to the Christian

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<sup>23</sup> Colet, Cristina (2013): 70-79.

<sup>24</sup> Borsa (1977): 10, 229-240, 249-254.

<sup>25</sup> Cassese, Antonio (1984): 48-49.

<sup>26</sup> Fairbank, John K. – Reischauer, Edwin O. – Craig, Albert M. (1974): 2 voll.

<sup>27</sup> Capristo, Vincenza C. (2012): 32.

missions<sup>28</sup>. The population impoverished by the disintegration of the traditional economy accused the Qing dynasty of being unable to face the emerging difficulties whilst the anti-Western or rather anti-missionary sentiment widespread in the country was underestimated by the diplomatic corps resident in Beijing used to this forms of violence; reason why the same Diplomats understated the Boxer movement and considered it as isolated episodes of violence. The movement aimed at avoiding two risks: an internal one represented by the reformists' increasing pressure and an external one constituted by the Western Powers' abuses and their demands for concessions of strategic and wider areas. The deadly balance resulting from the Boxer war was elevated especially in the northern areas: 5 bishops and 31 European priests, 45 Catholic missionaries, over 100 Chinese priests and nuns, about 190 Protestant pastors with their respective families, for a total of nearly 2,000 dead, and an approximate number of 40,000 Chinese Christians, in addition to massive material destruction. These are the war' consequences suffered by the North whilst in the South of the country the local authorities signed agreements with the foreign consuls to maintain the public order<sup>29</sup>. The target of the Boxers was not so much Christianity as religion, but rather its ideology that overturned old patterns of an ancestral society; at the end of 1890 the Christian influence was so powerful as to influence the same imperial court. The new politicized and urbanized elites feared the vulnerability and weakness of the Qing and then began to organize themselves to face government policy<sup>30</sup>. It was the desperate attempt of defence of a traditional society undermined by a world that was turning out to be completely unknown. The pecuniary compensation requested from China for damages suffered was onerous; after many years, discussions continued on the appropriateness of requests from missionary bodies, even though they used the sums perceived in large part for the reconstruction of works and buildings of worship. The reparations requested do appear improper if one considers the terrible conditions of the countryside. The Boxer movement's attempt to stem the *westernization* was a failure but gave birth to a certain patriotism and introduced high value men - such as the founder of the Chinese Republic Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) - to the people. In 1900 the Catholic Church in China was organized into 41 districts between dioceses and vicariates<sup>31</sup>. During the 11 years that led to the end of the Manchu dynasty the situation remained unchanged and exacerbated the differences between East and West: whilst the Westerners did hope in the Christianity' reinforcement the Easterners imagined the "new course" characterized by a strong anti-religious attitude<sup>32</sup>. The "yellow danger" that the Westerners had to face this time was represented by angry

<sup>28</sup> Cohen P.A. 1992: 82-113; Id. 1997: 95; Id. 2003: 105-130. Sabattini, Mario – Santangelo, Paolo (20118): 545 s.; Tiedeman R.G. (2010): 340 s.

<sup>29</sup> Sabattini, Mario – Santangelo, Paolo (20118): 547.

<sup>30</sup> Bays D.H. (2012): 85.

<sup>31</sup> Cary-Elwes, Columba (1959): 60-68, 313; D'Elia, Pasquale (1934): 60-68; Charbonnier, Jean (1992).

<sup>32</sup> Panikkar Kavalam, Madhava (1958): 460.



Boxers ready to engage a fight with them. In the European public opinion the Boxer war was lived as a conflict that involved Europeans not because they were foreigners, but as Christians and opponents to China's pragmatism. The Catholic and Protestant European missionaries, who suffered harsh persecutions, became the spokesmen of the abovementioned feeling.

### **The Russian-Japanese war 1904-1905**

The Sino-Japanese war it is another conflict to consider by scholars in order to study the so-called yellow danger. The war involved two empires, the Japanese and the Qing and started in 1894 to end a year later with the treaty of Shimonoseki. The treaty granted Taiwan to Japan along with other territories and privileges. The Russian-Japanese war<sup>33</sup> of 1904-1905 changed again the perception of the yellow danger since the Westerners acknowledge to Japan the total control over the Far East<sup>34</sup>: this means the Westerners ended up the Japanese as white people. The two countries involved in the conflict had imperialist ambitions and they fought over the control of Manchuria. Until the outbreak of the war the information from the Far East arrived to Europe through the missionaries' tales. The Russian-Japanese war introduced the role of the war correspondent: the Italians were the first together with the European observers to do the work despite the military censorship. With the Tsarist Empire policy turning to Asia and the war outbreak, the yellow alarm diverted now the European attention from a more imminent danger: the Slavic one<sup>35</sup>. The concept of "yellow danger" changes becoming a common theme in the mass culture and reflecting the stereotypes of racism, imperialism and colonialism. As highlighted by Valdo Ferretti<sup>36</sup> about the Italian press: after the Boxer war there was a lack of news related to Japan except few pages on the international politics, while the Manchuria' crisis and the beginning of the Russian-Japanese war increased the publication of articles<sup>37</sup> on the conflict. War news opened the newspapers' front pages, discussing all military and diplomatic aspects rather than focusing on the politic point view, in order to satisfy the readers' curiosity about these countries. At first public opinion's interest was for Korea, Manchuria and Russia but the early Japanese victories diverted its attention to the land of the Rising Sun and its culture. It was the first time for a great Power of the old continent to be defeated and the first time that there was a debate on Japan and on the impact that these events would have had on the future of the European countries<sup>38</sup>. The press showed much more sympathy for the Rising

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<sup>33</sup> Barzini, Luigi (1916).

<sup>34</sup> Corradini, Piero (2003) I: 268-273; Reischauer, Edwin O. (2003).

<sup>35</sup> Melani, Igor (2017): 86-111; Introduzione: 18-20.

<sup>36</sup> Ferretti, Valdo (2003) I: 274-281; Galluppi, Massimo (1988).

<sup>37</sup> Tamburello, Adolfo (1991/1993), I: 105-108.

<sup>38</sup> Barzini, Luigi (1907); Dal Verme, Luchino (1885); De Courten, Ludovica (1986): 51-75; De Rosa, Immacolata (2003), I: 219-228.

Sun land than for Russia and almost everybody from the right to the left side agreed. Japan was no longer considered an extravagant and fantastic world since a proper nation that thanks to the industrial modernization and military successes had changed becoming competitive in comparison with Europe. However, some people questioned on the nature of its amazing achievements, analyzing his traditional civilization, art and religion; on the speed that the land of the Rising Sun had to make itself similar to the European countries. All of this was obviously a reflection of the effectiveness demonstrated during the war with Russia. The press projected different and contrasting images, however, the Italian press did not ignore that Japan had an ancient culture. Whilst at the beginning of the war in Europe the idea to sympathize with Russia as a form of European solidarity was rejected, over time in Italy as well elsewhere the concern for the defense of the European positions in the Far East related to the Japanese threat became strong. In conclusion, there was a contrast between the aim of Europeans and the Japanese ones. The war had shown that Asians could defeat the Europeans, therefore it was essential to be careful with Japanese and their clear resentment against Western civilization.

## Conclusions

It is clear that the fear of a foreign invasion has always characterized European history. In this short article we tried to highlight, starting from nowadays, how the danger of a foreign invasion, might frighten a still too fragile Europe in its structure and how this danger has been faced by different European countries, above all when, between 1800 and 1900 there was a debate on a possible “yellow danger”; all this amplified by news coming, in the first phase, from Catholic missionaries, then from war correspondents. It is possible to affirm that the Catholic missionaries on the one hand have played a fundamental importance to know a new world so different from Europe and on the other hand, together with the press and the public opinion, they did amplify the European fear of the other.

Moreover, in Europe there was the fear that these immense Chinese masses could invest Europe because at the same time in the America, Australia and New Zealand there was a strong Chinese emigration, followed by the Japanese one. In those countries they begun to talk of a “yellow danger” which they judged directly invasive<sup>39</sup>. Moreover, in this research we tried to focus on other events that increased the perception of this danger, namely the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895 because, in reality, it was a real conflict between two empires: the Japanese and the Qing one. This conflict was decisive for the entire Western world in order to dissolve the apprehension of the yellow danger by delivering a large part of East Asia to a modern Japan seen as “ethnically white”. This judgment of the public opinion was strengthened by the

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<sup>39</sup> Daniels R. (1995).

Russian-Japanese conflict that ended with the victory of the Japanese empire over the Tsarist empire and affirmed the international position of Japan as one of the great Powers; in addition, Japan will be granted the control over the "yellow world" partially shared with Russia.

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