



4-27-2015

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Constructing the Yellow Peril: East Asia as the Enemy in American
Discourse and Political Rhetoric

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April 27, 2015

Submitted to the faculty of Ursinus College in fulfillment of the
requirements for Honors in International Relations and East Asian
Studies

The notion of the Yellow Peril, the perceived racial threat of Asians or Asian nations overtaking Western Nations and Western culture, is not a new phenomenon, but instead an idea that has existed for many centuries, becoming popular in the nineteenth century. The Yellow Peril has been a potent belief which has influenced not only personal opinions, but has also affected Western foreign policy. The United States, whose ideological foundations were built upon Western ideology, was not immune to concerns of the Yellow Peril. Drawing on the theories of critical constructivism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism, this study analyzes the manifestation of the Yellow Peril in American discourse and political rhetoric from the mid-nineteenth century to the present.

Introduction

When I was a child, I spent quite a bit of time at my grandparents' house, which was filled with antiques. They had collected everything from comic books to an old carousel horse. My grandparents also had an abundance of dolls, which were displayed in nearly every room. These dolls ranged in age, size and shape. Some were newer, like the mint condition Cabbage Patch Kid doll that stared happily from its plastic and cardboard prison. Others were older, like some of the turn-of-the-century dolls, whose delicate porcelain heads, hands, and feet were attached to puffy, cotton cloth bodies and were clothed in delicate, lacy gowns. But, there was only one doll that I actually liked. On the bottom shelf of a cabinet in my grandparents' dining room was a tall, pale doll dressed in a long white and blue robe that flowed onto the floor with a golden sash tied around her waist in a large bow. As a small child, all I wanted to do was play with this doll, but I was told over and over again by my grandmother that I could not play with her because she was very special. This was a "geisha doll" that my grandfather had bought for my grandmother when he was stationed in Japan after the Korean War. One day when I was in elementary school, I was watching television and saw an advertisement for a television show that had characters dressed in clothes that were similar to the Japanese doll that I loved so much. In spite of the fact that the television show came on long after I was supposed to be asleep, I decided to watch it. This was the beginning of my fascination with Japan and Japanese culture.

From elementary school through late high school, I tried to learn as much about Japan as possible, but it was only during my senior year of high school that I truly began to learn more about Japan and also the history of the relationship between the United States and Japan. In my last year of high school, I decided to take Advanced Placement United States History. The class had two major requirements, the first was the creation of a project that could be entered in the

National History Day competition, and the second was a research paper. I finally decided that it was time to start doing research on the topic that I loved. I asked my teacher for any ideas on how I could bring Japan into a project that was intended to be on American history. Her first response was to look into Japanese internment camps.

In spite of the fact that I had taken three separate classes covering modern American history, I had never heard of Japanese internment camps. As I researched information on Japanese Internment camps, I also learned of the notion of the Yellow Peril, the fear of Eastern cultures eventually overthrowing Western culture, and this fear was heavily influenced by negative stereotypes that were widely circulated by the media. This influenced me to write my senior research paper on media representations of Japanese Americans before and during WWII, and how these representations affected views on Japanese Americans.

As my history class progressed, we finally approached the chapter covering WWII. Within that chapter was a paragraph, perhaps two, explaining Japanese internment, and then the author quickly moved on to the next topic. I felt that in spite of the great injustice that was done to many Japanese Americans, this part of history was mostly swept under the rug, and instead the aspects of history that fit in with America's grand narrative were brought to the forefront.

As this study will show, Asian immigrants to the United States faced strong prejudice and this prejudice has continued, albeit in more muted forms, up through the present. During my research, I found that in spite of the fact that Japanese and Chinese immigrants began arriving at separate times, they faced many similar challenges to beginning new lives in the United States. Chinese and Japanese immigrant families experienced difficulty attempting to retain parts of their traditions while trying to assimilate and also encountered tension caused by the prejudices of Americans. It seemed that essentially the Japanese and Chinese were portrayed as two waves

of the same “plague.” At the same time, however, there were times when Japanese and Chinese-Americans were held up as exemplary citizens. This study examines the persistence as well as variation in American attitudes towards Asians and Asian immigrants. It argues that ambivalence is rooted in a deep-seated tendency to look upon Asians as both inferior and threatening; as such, negative attitudes come to the fore during times of economic and social instability.

This study builds on the previous research that I have done concerning Japan, China, and Japanese and Chinese immigrants in America, but focuses on the idea of the Yellow Peril, the fear that Asian people or nations could take over or destroy Western culture. America’s relationship with Japan has changed completely since World War II, as Japan has come to be one of America’s top allies; relations with China have improved dramatically since the United States extended formal recognition to the People’s Republic of China in 1979. Nonetheless, as I will show, this does not necessarily mean that all notions of the Yellow Peril have faded from American foreign policy. I will argue that in spite of America's increased favorable relations with Japan and China, American discourse and political rhetoric still favor the representation of East Asia as the Yellow Peril in times of hardship or conflict. which finds Asian nations as inferior to Western nations. My findings rely on three basic ideas: 1) that notions of the Yellow Peril are connected to Orientalist assumptions of Western superiority, 2) that beliefs of Western superiority over non-Western nations still persists, and 3) that discourse reflects ideology as well as power relationships within society and has the ability to create a stable identity over time. In order to explain the continuation of the presence of Yellow Peril concerns in American views about Asia and Asian-Americans, I will analyze American relations with Japan and China from the mid-nineteenth century to the present from a critical constructivist approach, which reflects the idea that identities are created through interactions between actors and eventually these

identities form a stable institution which helps to determine further interactions. However, critical constructivism also notes the presence of power relationships in the creation of “self” and “other.” Therefore, critical constructivism draws upon other critical theories, such as poststructuralism and postcolonialism. Critical theories question the absoluteness of what are deemed “truths.” Poststructuralism concerns the power relations presented in discourse, and postcolonialism critiques western-centric norms and values.

In Chapter 1, I will lay out the methodology of my research, further explaining critical constructivism and its critical theory components, as well as discuss Orientalism and its relation to the Yellow Peril. Chapter 2 is the first chapter of my analysis of cases of American perceptions of the Yellow Peril. I will begin by explaining the history of Chinese and Japanese immigration to the United States, and then move to the examination of the beginnings of the fears of the Yellow Peril, which developed shortly after the initial immigration of Chinese and was later applied to Japanese immigrants. In Chapter 3 I will address the period of time between 1900 and 1941, examining the shifts in American perceptions of the Chinese, the Japanese and Chinese and Japanese-Americans. The Fourth Chapter concerns American differentiations between Chinese and Japanese and Japanese and Germans during WWII, and demonstrates the differentiation between “good” and “bad” Orientals as well as racial differences between enemies of the United States. Chapter 5 explores American perceptions of Japan from the 1970s through the 1990s. Chapter 6 then explores the revived fear of “Red China” in the 1990s to the present.

Chapter 1: Methodology

Throughout time, civilization has developed due to interaction, whether these interactions were between humans and nature or between different groups of people. The main theory that I will adhere to is critical constructivism. This theory borrows much from its parent theory, constructivism, supporting the idea that reality is shaped by social interaction and over time the actions and reactions between actors give rise to relatively stable identities and interests. However, critical constructivism also incorporates the critiques from critical theories, such as feminism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism, especially concerning positivism, the idea that there can be absolute truth. The main critical theories which I will be drawing on are poststructuralism, which analyzes how images and language shape the way topics are presented, and critiques the idea that objectivity is possible due to the fact that how objects are viewed is derived from discourse, and postcolonialism, which is critical of the tendency to privilege western-centric ideals and values. In order to explain critical constructivism, I will begin by laying out the foundations of critical constructivism's parent theory, constructivism, and then move to explaining the critical theories which I will draw upon. I will then end this section with a discussion of the Yellow Peril and Orientalism, noting how the two are connected and how they fit with the critical theories.

1) Constructivism

Alexander Wendt, one of the most well-known constructivists, offers a few basic points on constructivism in his essay "Anarchy is What States Make of it." Wendt first offers that "[a] fundamental principle of constructivist social theory is that people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them."¹ Karin M. Fierke,

¹ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring, 1992): 396.

another constructivist scholar, gives the example of a few ordinary objects, such as a rifle, a musical instrument, and a totem pole. All of these objects can be made from wood, and yet, each object has a different use and meaning. The differences in these objects lie in social constructs, such as “social values, norms, and assumptions.”² Wendt also tries to demonstrate his theory by positing the hypothetical scenario that the concept of a “university” is forgotten. If this were to happen, then “[t]he powers and practices of a professor and student cease to exist... It is collective meanings that constitute the structures which organize our actions.”³ Concepts and objects, such as a university, or, from Fierke’s article, a totem pole, only have meaning due to the association that is assigned by society. However, meaning is not created in a vacuum. Ted Hopf, another constructivist scholar, comments in his book *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities & Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 & 1999* that “identities can only be understood relationally. We cannot know what an identity is without relating it to another.”⁴

Constructivism acknowledges the importance of interaction between actors and the role that interaction has upon the shaping of international relations. Wendt argues that before or apart from interaction, that states do not have a conception of the need for security, that is, they do not automatically see each other as rivals.⁵ Prior to interaction, states do not have a concept of “self”.⁶ They just simply exist. Wendt gives the example of two actors, Alter and Ego. In their first meeting, Ego makes a display that he believes will convey. Alter does not know what exactly Ego intends, so he must make an inference about Ego’s intention based on Ego’s gesture and appearance:

² Karin M. Fierke, “Constructivism” in *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*, 10th ed. ed. Robert Art and Robert Jervis (New York: Longman, 2011), 188.

³ Wendt, 397.

⁴ Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 & 1999* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 7.

⁵ Wendt, 401

⁶ *Ibid.*, 402.

This process of signaling, interpreting, and responding completes a ‘social act’ and begins the process of creating intersubjective meanings...The first social act creates expectations on both sides about each other’s future behavior: potentially mistaken and certainly tentative, but expectations nonetheless.⁷

After the initial interaction, the actors must interpret each other’s actions based upon their own understandings of the other’s actions. As more interactions occur, further information can be drawn about intent, which then shapes the way in which interactions occur in further meetings. Wendt comments that “people act differently towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have to them. States act differently towards enemies than they do toward friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not.” Through interactions and “participati[on] in collective meanings,” identities are acquired.⁸

Wendt further notes the larger implications of identities, commenting that “identities are the basis of interests.”⁹ Interests do not exist outside of social context. These interests are instead defined “in the process of defining situations.”¹⁰ Interests do not exist *a priori*, but are defined through social interaction. These identities eventually gain stability and form a structure. Wendt uses the term “institution” to refer to structure created from stable identities and interests. These institutions possess a normative force, but only “in virtue of actors’ socialization to and participation in collective knowledge.”¹¹

Socially constructed norms form the basis of understanding and change. “[S]ocial beings, individuals, or states cannot be separated from a context of normative meaning which shapes who they are and the possibilities available to them.”¹² The concept of existence is directly linked to the constructs of society: people are a product of their social environment. However,

⁷ Ibid., 404-405.

⁸ Ibid., 397.

⁹ Ibid., 398.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Fierke, 190

this environment is not entirely unchangeable. Audie Klotz and Cecelia Lynch comment in their book *Strategies for Research in Constructivist International Relations* that “[a]ccepted desires and behaviors in one period or society may be derided in other times, in other places, or by people in other social settings.”¹³ Each society or state develops its own social constructs and these constructs can also change over time.

These norms then create a structure for international relations without suggesting that these institutions are eternal. Fierke explains that constructivists do not view norms as creating an objective reality, or a concrete structure for relations, but instead suggest that we live in a world that we can shape.¹⁴ Norms can act as a guiding structure, but are malleable. Fierke also notes that “[r]ather than emphasizing how structures constrain... constructivists focus on the constitutive role of norms and shared understanding, as well as the relationship between agency and structure.”¹⁵

Overall, constructivism suggests that international relations do not just revolve around material factors, but instead are also affected by relationships between actors and over time these relationships become stable. U.S. relations with East Asia will take shape based upon interactions with each other. Material concerns, such as the economy or military movements may factor into relations, but what will matter the most is how initial relations between the United States and East Asian nations will later develop into a pattern that can influence further interaction.

¹³ Audie Klotz and Cecelia Lynch, *Strategies for Research in Constructivist International Relations* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2007), 10.

¹⁴ Fierke, 189.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 191.

2) Critical Constructivism

Where critical constructivism varies from the classical idea of constructivism is over its approach to analyzing identities and its treatment of positivism. Hopf explains that constructivists mainly seek to understand “identities and their associated reproductive social practices, and then offer an account of how those identities imply certain actions.”¹⁶ Constructivists look at existing identities in order to understand how these identities might affect interactions in the future. Critical constructivists have a different approach to analyzing identities. Hopf notes that constructivists tend to “accommodate a cognitive account for identity, or offer no account at all;” whereas, critical constructivists attempt to understand the origins of identity, often seeing “some form of alienation driving the need for identity.”¹⁷ In other words, critical constructivists look at the tendency for actors to form their own identity by distinguishing themselves from others. In addition, critical constructivism challenges positivism. Emanuel Adler comments that critical constructivism argues that “social facts are constituted by the structures of language and that, accordingly, consciousness can be studied only as mediated by language.”¹⁸

2) Poststructuralism

The influence of language as well as imagery is also found in another political theory, poststructuralism. Poststructuralism analyzes how images and language shape the way topics are presented and critiques the idea that objectivity is possible. David Campbell, a poststructuralist scholar, comments that poststructuralism “promotes a new set of questions and concerns,” and a

¹⁶ Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” *International Security* 23, no. 1 (Summer, 1998): 183.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁸ Emanuel Adler, “Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates.” In *Handbook of International Relations*. ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse-Kappen, and Beth A. Simmons (London: SAGE, 2013), 115.

critical attitude rather than forming an entirely new theory.¹⁹ The main tenets of poststructuralism are 1) that complete objectivity is not possible 2) that discourse forms knowledge, and 3) that knowledge is power.

First, poststructuralism is wary of positivist assertions that create the sense of absolute truths. Maja Zehfuss comments that “meaning is not constant or fixed; rather interpretations, which are all there is, compete and change.”²⁰ It is not necessarily possible to form one concrete truth because doing so is only viewing an idea or topic from one certain perspective, therefore biasing certain views over others. David Campbell further explains this connection, stating that poststructuralists more closely identify with a post-empiricist stance, which suggests moving beyond trying to define “truths” in language, and instead finding meaning in language by the way it is “embedded in social practice.”²¹ The meanings of words within every language are not sterile and unchanging, but instead are imbued with social meaning and may vary over time.

Poststructuralists also emphasize the power of discourse on knowledge. Campbell comments:

[D]iscourses are performative. Performative means that discourses constitute the objects of which they speak. For example, states are made possible by a wide range of discursive practices that include immigration policies, military deployments and strategies, cultural debates about normal social behavior, political speeches and economic investments.²²

Discourse applies not only to language, but also to images and depictions, due to the fact that there is no way of comprehending images and depictions other than using language.²³ For example, Campbell uses a case study of images of humanitarian crises in order to point out

¹⁹ David Campbell, “Poststructuralism,” in *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*, 10th ed. ed. Robert Art and Robert Jervis (New York: Longman, 2011), 225.

²⁰ Maja Zehfuss, “Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, and Postcolonialism,” in *Handbook of International Relations*. Ed. by Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse-Kappen, and Beth A. Simmons (London: SAGE, 2013), 152.

²¹ Campbell, 228.

²² *Ibid.*, 235.

²³ *Ibid.*

Western construction of a humanitarian situation. Campbell explains that humanitarian crises are a constructed event for most of the world since most people have not experienced such grave problems. Instead, this event is largely constructed by media representation of the situation.²⁴

Images and words are used to help people better understand humanitarian crises, but these words and pictures also play on preexisting ideas that are relatable to the target demographic.

Lastly, power and its relationship to knowledge factor greatly into poststructuralism. Campbell comments that in international relations, those who are white, Western, or possess money or influence are the ones who create the “dominant interpretations of ‘the world’” and influence the concerns of international politics, such as security, economic relations, and the “rights of those who are being badly treated.”²⁵ Due to the West’s perception of dominance, Western interpretations of human rights, security, economics, and other aspects of international relations are often seen as the correct way or the absolute truth. Therefore, what the West perceives as the correct form of knowledge creates a sense of authority in decisions. Campbell further illustrates by commenting on pictures taken during the Ethiopian famine of 1984. Mothers and their children were the main subjects in most newspaper articles focused on this particular famine. Through photographic techniques, such as using a high angle and having none of the subjects making eye contact, these photos emphasized the viewer’s sense of power and the subject’s hopelessness.²⁶ The discourse created from these images defines both the concept of “us” as well as “them”. “Given that most of the contemporary famine imagery comes from one continent, it reproduces the imagined geography of ‘Africa’, so that a continent of 900 million people in fifty-seven countries is homogenized into a single entity represented by a starving

²⁴ Ibid., 239.

²⁵ Ibid., 224.

²⁶ Ibid., 240.

child.”²⁷ All African nations are thus represented as being in a hopeless state that they cannot extricate themselves from, and Western intervention is then viewed as the only source of help.

Using poststructuralism, I will analyze the language addressing the issues of Asian Americans and American relations to East Asia. Since discourse reflects a sense of power, I will examine dialogue as well as images and look at what these forms of discourse say about power relations between “Americans” and Asians.

3) Postcolonialism

Like poststructuralism and many other critical theories, postcolonialism questions objectivity and asserts that knowledge is power. However, this discourse is aimed largely at critiquing Western dominance. Postcolonialism 1) critiques Western-centric ideals and values, and instead asserts the ideals and values of non-Western cultures, and 2) objects to western views of non-western nations as static and inferior.

In acknowledgement of the connection between knowledge and power, postcolonialists critique Western-dominated views of the world and instead emphasize the validity of non-Western cultures’ interpretations. Grovogui comments that “postcolonialism signals the decline of the European colonial order and associated ‘truths.’”²⁸ Frantz Fanon, a postcolonialist scholar comments that that for some it might seem that the time has come for under-developed countries to choose between capitalism and socialism. However, Fanon instead insists that “The Third World ought not to be content to define itself in the terms of values which preceded it. On the contrary, the under-developed countries ought to do their utmost to find their own particular values and methods and a style which shall be particular to them.”²⁹ The West tends to view

²⁷ Ibid., 240-241.

²⁸ Siba Grovogui, “Postcolonialism,” in *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*, 10th ed. ed. Robert Art and Robert Jervis (New York: Longman, 2011), 248.

²⁹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 78.

solutions for Third World problems in terms of black and white, with the Western way clearly being the right choice from their point of view. However, the solution for under-developed nations might be in fact in a grey area, not necessarily fully supporting the Western view of capitalism, nor siding with its opposite, socialism. Therefore, underdeveloped nations must assert their own views and not let their decisions be hindered by Western beliefs.

Postcolonialism also critiques Western notions of non-western nations as static and inferior “Othes.” Siba Grovogui, Professor of International Relations at Johns Hopkins University, notes that the idea of “native essentialism,” the assumption that non-Western nations have an eternal primitive quality, was used in the past to justify colonialism.³⁰

Postcolonialism is critical of favoring Western ideals over those of non-Western-ideals. I will use postcolonialism in this paper to highlight times where Americans have “othered” East Asians due to perceived differences between the West and the East.

Orientalism and the Yellow Peril

Whether we are conscious of it or not, prejudices against Asia and those of Asian heritage have been propounded in Western cultures for centuries in the form of Orientalism. Edward Said, one of the leading scholars on Orientalism, offers three different meanings for the term. First, he describes Orientalism as relating to academics:

Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient-and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist-either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism.”³¹

Orientalism, he continues, is a style of thought that seeks to make distinctions between “the Orient” and “the Occident” through the use of ontological and epistemological studies.³²

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 10.

³² Ibid.

Lastly, Said comments that from the eighteenth century on, Orientalism also became a “Western style for dominating restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”³³ These three different applications all have one thing in common: these applications seek to distinguish characteristics which differentiate the ingroup from the outgroup.

Orientalism may have begun as a way to study those from the “Orient,” but it also included views that favored Western nations. The European sense of identity developed over time. Gerard Delanty, a political sociologist, suggests that before the fifteenth century, Christianity was the dominant identity in Europe, and Europe itself was viewed primarily in a geographic sense.³⁴ Edward Said comments that the creation of Orientalism as a study was initiated by the Church Council of Vienne in 1312 which created chairs in Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac.³⁵ It was thought that learning Arabic would aid in converting Arabs to Christianity.³⁶ As time went on, however, “[t]he idea of Europe as the West began to be consolidated in the foreign conquests of the age of ‘discovery’.”³⁷ The fall of Constantinople, and the expansion of European powers to other countries led to the development of the idea of European values, although these values did not become fully institutional until the seventeenth century.³⁸ As European countries began to interact with other nations, Europe found factors other than Christianity to define their own identities.

Defining the European identity also caused scholars to attempt to differentiate the European identity from those of others. David W. Anthony notes in his article “Eurasia: The

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Gerard Delanty, “The Westernizing of Europe,” in *Yellow Peril: an Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*, ed. John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats (New York: Verso, 2014), 115.

³⁵ Ibid, 50.

³⁶ Francis Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils* (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1961) , quoted in Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974),355, endnote 18.

³⁷ Delanty, 115.

³⁸ Ibid.

Horse and the Wheel” that in modern Western cultures, “notions of Asian difference emerged from how Greek civilization has been abstracted and elevated from its historical regional context to stand in for the origins of that entity we call ‘Western Civilization.’”³⁹ The Greek identity was also created in relation to other rival cultures and the perceived otherness of different groups. The Greeks were not nomadic like the “Huns” and the Greeks did not see themselves as similar to their Persian enemies. “Early notions of Asia and ‘the Orient’ (where the sun rises to the east) were formulated from these roots, prefiguring much more fixed West/East divides later on.”⁴⁰ John Kuo Wei Tchen comments that as Western city-states became more secular and expanded to the North, West, and South, intellectuals of the Renaissance began to argue that “civilization” and “progress” followed the same path as the sun, evolving east to west.⁴¹ Just like the Greeks who sought to differentiate themselves from the groups that surrounded them, those in the Renaissance also looked towards their westward expansion to the New World and progress as separating them from others, and in a sense, creating fixed identities for themselves as well as others.

With the glorification of the “West” also came the debasing of the “East.” G. W. F. Hegel wrote an article in 1837 that intended to distinguish “Hither Asia,” Persia and Egypt, from “Farther Asia,” mainly India and China. Hegel claims:

While the Chinese and Hindoos—the two great nations of Farther Asia, already considered—belong to the strictly Asiatic, namely the Mongolian Race, and consequently possess a quite peculiar character, discrepant from ours; the nations of Hither Asia belong to the Caucasian, i.e. the European stock. The European who goes from Persia to India, observes, therefore, a prodigious contrast. Whereas in the former country he finds himself still somewhat at home, and meets European dispositions, human virtues, and human passions—as soon as he crosses

³⁹ David W. Anthony, “Eurasia: The Horse and the Wheel,” in *Yellow Peril: an Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*, ed. John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats (New York: Verso, 2014), 77.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ John Kuo Wei Tchen, “Mapping: Local Gone Global,” in *Yellow Peril: an Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*, ed. John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats (New York: Verso, 2014), 45.

the Indus (i.e., in the *latter* region), he encounters the most repellant characteristics, pervading every single feature of society.⁴²

Hegel's comments display his glorification of Western society as he classified Persia as having "human" virtues and passions. Therefore, from this implication that the West has these "human" traits, he gives the impression that those of Asian cultures are less than human. Hegel was not alone in his negative views on Asians. Carl Linnaeus compared the traits of five different races in the tenth edition of his monograph *Systema Naturae*. He deemed Europeans to be "*gentle, accurate, and inventive... [and] [g]overned by laws.*" Asians were "*severe, haughty, covetous... [and] [g]overned by opinions.*"⁴³ Linnaeus attributed more negative personality traits to Asians than to Europeans.

More stereotypes persisted than just Asians as inferior to Europeans. Many also came to fear the possibility of Asian culture damaging the West. Said asserts that "the Orient is at bottom something to either be feared (the Yellow Peril, the Mongol Hordes, the brown dominions) or to be controlled (by pacification, research and development, outright occupation whenever possible)."⁴⁴ Viewing Asia as the "Yellow Peril" also has a long lineage. John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats comment that the origins of the term "Yellow Peril" are "tangled yet consistent." Tchen and Yeats mention that one of the first use of a phrase relating directly to the "Yellow Peril" was by Bernard Mandeville around 1425. Mandeville commented "'It es grete peril to pursue be [by] Tartarens [Tartars of the Mongol armies].'"⁴⁵ Tchen and Yeats explain that "[n]on-Christian 'heathens' and nomadic warrior Mongols were automatic perils to the settled

⁴² G. W. F. Hegel, "Hither and Farther in Asia," in *Yellow Peril: an Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*, ed. John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats (New York: Verso, 2014), 144.

⁴³ Carl Linnaeus, "Five Categories of Homo Sapiens," in *Yellow Peril...129-130*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 300-301.

⁴⁵ John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, *Yellow Peril: An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear* (New York: Verso, 2014), 12.

Christian way of life.”⁴⁶ The original fear of Asians existed long before the term “Yellow Peril” was actually coined. Tchen and Yeats add that German Kaiser Wilhelm II is often attributed to coining the term “‘die Gelbe Gefahr’ or ‘the Yellow Peril:’”

Wilhelm claimed to have had a prophetic dream of a seated Buddha riding a vicious dragon storm upon Europe. He commissioned Hermann Knackfuss in 1895 to illustrate his dream as gifts to leaders of Europe and America.⁴⁷

Whether or not Kaiser Wilhelm II truly coined this term is not important. What is significant is that there was a new concern of an Asian force that would contend with and possibly overthrow Western culture. Tchen and Yeats further explain the portrait, noting two different interpretations of the figures in the painting, entitled “Peoples of Europe, Defend your Holiest Possessions,” which is depicted in figure 1. The first interpretation is that the women represent “the virtue of white womanhood imagined as the hallmark of Western civilization.” The interpretation is that “‘holiest possessions’” mentioned in the title could also be translated into “‘dearest goods,’” from the Lockean idea of “liberal self-possession.” Wilhelm was not only threatened by the Japanese, but also other European nations who sought to control the remaining Chinese territory. Wilhelm thus sought to use the fear of Japan to avoid a competition over the land, which he “feared Germany would lose.”⁴⁸ Fear in this case was not only used by the Kaiser to avoid an unfavorable outcome, losing Chinese territory to other European nations, but also a way to create a sense of solidarity between Western nations.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 12-14.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁸ Ibid.



Figure 1: “Peoples of Europe, Defend your Holiest Possessions” by Hermann Knackfuss⁴⁹

How can an ethnic group be looked as inferior in one case and yet a terrifying challenge to ethnicities who declared themselves to be the pinnacle of the human race at other times? This is a paradox that has occurred in American foreign policy since the beginning of East Asian immigration to the United States. At points Asians, especially Asian Americans have been seen as a “Yellow Peril,” but at other times they are portrayed as “the model minority,” exemplifying everything that America espouses. Keith Aoki attempts to explain this phenomenon through looking at the shift between portrayals of Asian Americans as the “model minority” and the “Yellow Peril” in American discourse. Aoki asserts while racial narratives at the macro level change slowly, changes at the micro level, can change swiftly, causing variations in tone, but still

⁴⁹ This image was found in John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, “Yellow Peril: 19th-Century Scapegoating,” *Asian American Writer’s Workshop*, <http://aaww.org/yellow-peril-scapegoating/> (accessed March 4, 2015).

carrying the influence of negativity.⁵⁰ The overarching tone is one of control and superiority and negativity; Westerners have the ability to decide when Asians are “friends” and when they are “the enemies.” These stereotypes, Aoki continues, are “paradoxical” because they have both a stable and yet fluid identity. “With only a slight shift of emphasis, the ‘Yellow Peril’ becomes the ‘model minority.’”⁵¹

To further explain, Aoki quotes Gary Okihiro:

The Asian work ethic, family values, self-help, culture, and inter-marriage—all elements of the model minority—can also be read as components of the Yellow Peril. Asian workers can be “diligent” and “slavish,” “frugal” and “cheap,” “upwardly mobile” and “aggressive,” while Asian families and communities can be “mutual aid” and “self-serving” institutions, “inclusive” and “exclusive” groupings, “multicultural enclaves” and “balkanized ghettos.” Asian religious beliefs can be characterized as “transcendental” and “paganism,” “filial piety” and “superstition” while intermarriage can indicate “assimilation” and “mongrelization,” “integration” and “infiltration,” and children can be “our second-generation problem” and “our amazing Chinese kids.” “Model” can be “perils” and “perils,” models....

... [T]he Yellow Peril and the model minority are not poles, denoting opposite representations along a single line, but in fact form a circular relationship that moves in either direction.⁵²

The idea of a “circular relationship” also brings forth unpredictability. Rather than being viewed as constantly either “friend” or “foe,” the status of Asians could change at any given time.

The Yellow Peril and Orientalism are in fact connected. Both exert the idea of Western supremacy to decide how the East is viewed. On one part of the Oriental cycle was the benign Oriental, who though backwards, inferior, and unable to better themselves, could also be seen as exotic, and with the help of other Western nations, might be able to achieve a level of

⁵⁰ Keith Aoki, “‘Foreignness’ & Asian American Identities: Yellow Face, World War II Propaganda, and Bifurcated Racial Stereotypes,” *UCLA Asian Pacific Law Journal* 4, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 15.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵² Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington press, 1994), 50-51 quoted in Keith Aoki, “‘Foreignness’ & Asian American Identities: Yellow Face, World War II Propaganda, and Bifurcated Racial Stereotypes,” *UCLA Asian Pacific Law Journal* 4, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 36.

advancement that approached the level of Western advancement. On the other side of the cycle is the idea of the Yellow Peril. The West still has the power to dictate the negative aspects of Asian cultures which threaten it, often associating traits which are the antithesis of the traits which the West espouses. In the following chapters, I will isolate some cases where the ideas of the Yellow Peril and Orientalism occur in America's history.

Chapter 2: the Beginning of Perceptions of the Yellow Peril (1850's-1900)

In order to fully understand the how the Yellow Peril took shape in American discourse and political rhetoric, we must look to the very beginning of this notion in the United States: the immigration of Chinese to America followed shortly after by the immigration of Japanese. This section focuses on the first case of concerns of the Yellow Peril, which began with the fears of Euro-Americans of the negative consequences of Asian immigration to the United States. While Euro-Americans viewed Japan and China through an Orientalist lens, seeing Asian nations as backwards and static. At the same time that Euro-Americans proclaimed Asian countries' potential to grow under the tutelage of Western nations, immigrants from these countries were seen as bringing the worst traits of their homelands to America. In spite of many of the differences in the practices of Japanese and Chinese from those of Americans, fears of the Yellow Peril were mainly projected on those who immigrated to the United States rather than on China and Japan at this time. American discourse and rhetoric during this period not only reflected fears of economic competition, they forwarded the concern of the corruption of the predominantly white race, which tied into previous ideas of white racial supremacy.

The Beginning of Chinese Immigration

Chinese began migrating to Hawaii and the mainland United States half way through the nineteenth century. Many scholars, such as Sucheng Chan, note that Chinese immigrants were the first of the Asian immigrants to arrive in the United States. They were driven to leave China due to “powerful forces at home” and the attraction of gold in California.⁵³ Ronald Takaki comments that conflicts between the Chinese and the British, such as the Opium Wars, pressured

⁵³ Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 3.

many Chinese to emigrate.⁵⁴ These confrontations affected Chinese citizens physically and economically. Chan notes that after losing the First Opium War (1839-1842), China was forced to make concessions, such as opening five ports to allow foreign commerce, reducing the customs charge, paying an “indemnity of twenty one million silver dollars,” and “cede[ing] the island of Hong Kong to Great Britain.”⁵⁵ China’s second loss in the Anglo-Chinese War, also called the Second Opium War (1856-1860), caused the country to give even more concessions to Great Britain, including ceding the territory of Kowloon, legalizing opium, and paying another indemnity.⁵⁶ Ronald Takaki comments that in order to pay its indemnities, the Qing government “imposed high taxes on peasant farmers; unable to pay taxes, many of them lost their lands.”⁵⁷ The strain financially on Chinese at the time may have caused many to see migration as a viable option.

Domestic issues also caused many Chinese to migrate to different countries. Most Chinese immigrants came from a small area of China. Chan notes that most immigrants came from “five small regions in the two provinces of Fujian and Guangdong.”⁵⁸ Migration from these regions of China was not unusual. Takaki comments that “the Chinese already had a long history of movement overseas.”⁵⁹ This area of China suffered from many local conflicts. Takaki notes that peasant rebellions, such as the Red Turban Rebellion, which caused fighting “over possession of fertile delta lands,” influenced Chinese in areas of conflict to emigrate.⁶⁰ Chan comments that the Taiping Rebellion took place in South and Central China, and although “the fiercest fighting did

⁵⁴ Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 192.

⁵⁵ Chan, 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁷ Takaki, *Different Mirror*, 192

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁹ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989), 31-32.

⁶⁰ Takaki, *Different Mirror*, 192.

not take place in South China, the Taiping armies did trample fields, sack dwellings, and conscript villagers” in the regions that later produced large numbers of emigrants.⁶¹ Domestic turmoil was a large factor that convinced many Chinese citizens to consider emigration, but that does not explain why Chinese immigrants chose to immigrate to the United States.

The allure of the United States for many Chinese emigrants was the prospect of earning more money. Ronald Takaki notes that many Chinese emigrants were attracted by the chance of finding gold or employment.⁶² In spite of the allure of a richer life in the United States, many did not intend to stay. Takaki adds that a majority of Chinese men who migrated to the United States were married, and in spite of the fact that they knew that they would not see their homes or families for many years, these migrants “promised to return someday.”⁶³

Reception of Chinese Migrants: The Terror that Came Here

Although many Chinese migrants expected to be able to lead a better life in the United States, this was not often the case. In spite of the initial positive reactions from Euro-Americans, negative sentiments of Chinese immigrants began to grow. The main factor that drove this fear was concerns of Chinese immigrants taking Euro-American jobs, but this also resulted in the use of other accusations, such as Chinese bringing disease as well as moral ills to the United States.

Initially, there was not much prejudice against the first Asian immigrants to the United States, but as the number of Asian immigrants increased, the resistance to Asian immigration increased. In 1852, the *Daily Alta California* featured an article about the arrival of more Chinese immigrants. The author noted the arrival of an increasing number of Chinese immigrants as an “increase to this worthy integer of our population,” and predicted that Chinese immigrants and their children would one day take part in the same activities as other American

⁶¹ Ibid., 8.

⁶² Ibid., 192.

⁶³ Ibid., 194.

citizens, such as voting and attending schools with other American children.⁶⁴ In spite of the initial rosy view of coexistence, it did not take long before the image of the Yellow Peril took hold in American society. Ariane Knüsel comments that Chinese immigrants were quickly made the targets of taxes and laws due to the fact that they were unwanted by Euro-Americans. In 1854, the California Supreme Court verdict of *People vs. Hall* also ruled that Chinese were not white and that Chinese could not give testimonies against whites.⁶⁵ Laws eventually developed that separated the Chinese farther from Euro-Americans.

The complaints against Chinese migrants came in two main forms. They were accused of stealing economic opportunity from “real” Americans and bringing physical and moral ills to society. In Hawaii and the United States, complaints over economic competition arose. Chan comments that as the Chinese population in Hawaii increased, more and more people began to find fault with them. In spite of the fact that sugar cane plantation owners believed that Chinese laborers were “satisfactory workers” and often asked them to “sign on for a second term,” many Chinese turned down the offer because of the poor treatment by the *luna*, or overseers. Instead, many Chinese found other work as “peddlers,” merchants, and tenants or owners of rice farms. “For several decades, rice was the second most important source of income in the Hawaiian economy, and Chinese were its main cultivators.”⁶⁶ It is possible that the spread of Chinese to other jobs, as well as becoming the main producers of one of Hawaii’s major exports, may have driven fear of economic competition.

⁶⁴ *Daily Alta California*, May 12, 1852; Lai Chun-Chuen, *Remarks of the Chinese Merchants of San Francisco, upon Governor Bigler’s Message* (San Francisco, 1855) in Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989), 81.

⁶⁵ Ariane Knüsel, *Framing China : Media Images and Political Debates in Britain, the USA and Switzerland, 1900-1950* (Abingdon, Oxon, GBR: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2012), 158.

⁶⁶ Chan, 27.

Tensions also developed in the United States. Takaki explains that there was an emerging movement for Euro-Americans to eliminate competition from foreign miners by “[driving] out the French, Mexican, Hawaiian, Chilean, and especially the Chinese from the gold fields.”⁶⁷ Chinese were disliked in many positions, not just as miners: Takaki adds that there was also tension between Euro American and Chinese workers in agriculture and factory labor, which drove many Chinese to become self-employed, often owning stores, restaurants, or laundries.⁶⁸

Chinese immigrants were not only accused of bringing bodily diseases, but also moral “diseases to both Hawaii and the mainland United States. The threat of “diseases” brought by Chinese did factor into the stemming of Chinese immigration to Hawaii. Chan also explains that missionaries and politicians “who claimed to champion the [native Hawaiians’] welfare” believed that the Chinese were bringing “dreaded diseases, such as leprosy and smallpox, and immoral habits, such as opium smoking and gambling,” which was a danger to the Hawaiians.⁶⁹ Similar ideas also appeared on the mainland of the United States. Ronald Takaki comments that Chinese immigrants were often portrayed similarly to blacks. Both races were portrayed as “heathen, morally inferior, savage, childlike, and lustful.”⁷⁰ These stereotypes of the Chinese also appeared in political rhetoric at the time. Takaki further mentions a quote from John F. Miller who commented at the California state constitutional convention in 1878 that, “Were the Chinese to amalgamate at all with our people, it would be the lowest, most vile and degraded of our race, and the result of that amalgamation would be a hybrid of the most despicable, a mongrel of the most detestable that has ever afflicted the earth.”⁷¹ These fears of potential racial corruption through marriage and reproduction led to the creation of laws on intermarriage.

⁶⁷ Takaki, *Different*, 81

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁶⁹ Chan, 27.

⁷⁰ Takaki, *Strangers*, 101.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Takaki continues, noting that in 1880, a law was passed which prevented marriage between a white person and a “negro, mulatto, or Mongolian.”⁷² Eventually, those who had cried out against Chinese as dangerous economic competitors and moral hazards were rewarded. Sucheng Chan notes that in 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, which “suspended the entry of Chinese laborers” for ten years, with the exception of “teachers, students and teachers, diplomats, and travelers.”⁷³

Fears of a coming Yellow Peril were also depicted in the media. An illustration that was featured in *The Wasp*, a California magazine, depicts a different version of Ellis Island (Figure 1). In the place of the Statue of Liberty stands a statue of a person of Chinese descent with one foot resting atop of a skull. Surrounding the head of the statue are words “Diseases,” “Immorality,” and “Filth,” along with the phrase “Ruin to...White...Labor.” These phrases function as an antithesis to the idea of the Statue of Liberty, who stands for democracy and freedom. Below this statue are ships coming into the harbor that could possibly be transporting more Chinese immigrants to America. This figure stands as a vision of what could happen to the United States if Chinese immigration were allowed to continue.

⁷² Takaki, *Strangers*, 102.

⁷³ Chan, 54.



Figure 2: George Frederick Keller, “A Statue for Our Harbor,” *The Wasp* (11.11.1881)⁷⁴

One might hypothesize that if Chinese migrants were viewed in such negative terms that those residing within China would be looked at similarly, but they were not. Michael Hunt comments that the first impressions of the Chinese that influenced the American elite came from secondhand observations from Enlightenment-era Europeans. However, there was also a negative view of the Chinese developing, focusing on the Chinese as not believing in free trade, following pagan rites, and partaking in immoral practices.⁷⁵ However, the positive view also reflected the potential of the Chinese in China to be made into something greater. Ariane Knüsel adds that Chinese who resided in China were actually looked at more favorably than Chinese immigrants due to the fact that Christian missionaries and the U.S. government portrayed the Chinese in China as “good people who could be converted to Christianity and that China could

⁷⁴ “A Statue for our Harbor,” *The Opper Project: Using Editorial Cartoons to Teach History*, <http://hti.osu.edu/opper/lesson-plans/immigration/images/a-statue-for-our-harbor> (accessed March 18, 2015)

⁷⁵ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 69.

become a democratic nation with the help of the USA.”⁷⁶ From the viewpoints of American elites, if China were taken under the wing of a thriving Western power like the United States, then China might eventually be able to achieve a civilized status close to that of the United States and reflect some of the values that the United States espoused.

The Beginning of Japanese Immigration

Migration from Japan to the United States was influenced by internal pressures caused by Western influence, and affected by the pull of contractors from Hawaii and California. The opening of Japan to foreign trade caused friction within the Japanese government, and eventually led to increased domestic pressure to emigrate. Many scholars, including Paul R. Spickard note that from 1636 to 1853, with the exception of a few Dutch and Chinese traders, the Tokugawa shogunate closed off Japan to outsiders.⁷⁷ The Tokugawa shogunate was controlled by *shogun*, military commanders, who “held sway over lesser feudal lords.”⁷⁸ Takaki adds that during this time of isolation, Japanese citizens were “forbidden by law from traveling to foreign lands.”⁷⁹ This nearly complete isolationism from Western contact that lasted for over two centuries was broken by the arrival of American ships. Paul Spickard explains that Commodore Perry traveled to Japan in 1853 and 1854 demanding that “Japan open its doors to trade and contact with the outside world. The Tokugawa shogunate retained power for ten years before being overthrown in the Meiji Restoration (1868).⁸⁰ Chan explains that the leaders of the Meiji Restoration “favored learning the ways of the West in order to cope with its might.” For centuries the emperor had been reduced to “titular status” and the leaders of the new government “came to power in the

⁷⁶ Knüsel, 160.

⁷⁷ Paul R Spickard, *Japanese Americans: the Formation and Transformation of an Ethnic Group* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 7.

⁷⁸ Chan, 8.

⁷⁹ Takaki, *Strangers*, 43.

⁸⁰ Spickard, 8.

name of ‘restoring’ the emperor...to paramount status.”⁸¹ One concern of Meiji government officials was avoiding the same fate as China. Spickard adds that the Meiji government wanted to keep foreign powers at bay as much as possible because of the example that was unfolding due to the imperial influences in China. In order to prevent European incursion, the Meiji government created a strong army and navy, as well as established “modern political institutions.”⁸² In order to try to prevent Japan from being taken over by other European nations, Japan decided to modernize and adopt some Western ideas.

The changes made to keep European powers at bay unfortunately also took both an economic and social toll on many Japanese citizens. Spickard comments that “the early Meiji years were hard economic times for nearly all Japanese.”⁸³ Inflation during the 1870’s, as well as heavy land taxation that was used in order to build Japan’s industrial base, caused farmers to suffer. In order to try to earn more money, some workers ventured into the cities seeking jobs; however, they found that “wages were low, the labor movement was being ruthlessly suppressed by the Japanese government, and industry did not have enough job slots to absorb all the landless laborers.”⁸⁴ Chan notes that because the samurai no longer existed, conscription was enacted.⁸⁵ Japanese were becoming more and more mired in the economic turmoil.

One way that Japanese Americans managed to escape and attempt to find more jobs was to emigrate from Japan to Hawaii and the United States. Chan comments that the Japanese government legalized emigration in 1885, and soon thereafter the first ship of contracted laborers set off for Hawaii. Most of the Japanese who decided to migrate came from a small area in the

⁸¹ Chan, 9.

⁸² Ibid., 8-9.

⁸³ Spickard, 11-12.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Chan, 11.

South West region of Japan.⁸⁶ Japanese, Takaki adds, also began to immigrate to the mainland United States by the 1890's due to the potential to earn higher wages. One immigrant, Inota Tawa estimated that the wages that he would earn in one year in America would be equivalent to the earnings of a governor in Japan.⁸⁷

Reactions to Japanese Migrants: Cut from the Same Cloth

In many ways, the Japanese were treated similarly during the last decade of the nineteenth century to the Chinese. Knüsel notes that initially Japanese migrants were also differentiated from Japanese who resided in Japan.⁸⁸ The views of Japan were actually more favorable than those of China. Knüsel further adds that some scientists had even tried to prove that the Japanese were also a part of the “white” race.⁸⁹ This may have been due to Japan adopting some Western ideals, and therefore making the Japanese more relatable from a Western point of view. Initially, Japanese immigrants were also looked upon favorably, and this may have been partially due to the fact that the Japanese government only permitted healthy, upstanding citizens to emigrate. Takaki notes that those wishing to leave Japan had to apply to the government to do so. Applicants were screened to make sure that they were healthy and would not tarnish Japan's reputation. Takaki mentions a comment made in 1884 by the Japanese Consul Takahashi Shinkichi who asserted that the poor character and behaviors of Chinese immigrants to the United States led to the implementation of the Chinese Exclusion act.⁹⁰ Japan had time to make changes to its immigration policy as it watched Americans react to Chinese immigrants. Therefore, Japan could make sure to select applicants whom the government felt would represent Japan and not cause tension to build between the United States and Japan.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Takaki, *Strangers*, 45.

⁸⁸ Knüsel, 160.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Takaki, *Strangers*, 46.

However, Japanese immigrants also began to experience the same prejudice that Chinese immigrants had. Spickard explains that Japanese Americans also felt prejudice “beginning in the early 1890’s.”⁹¹ Some of the laws were not directed at one Asian immigrant group, but instead Asian immigrants as a whole. Keith Aoki explains that there is a difference between orientalism and the American version of orientalism. Orientalism is “racialized ‘foreign-ness’ of persons from Asia and of Asian descent,” which separated the East from the West. American orientalism not only ascribes those of Asian descent with “foreign-ness,” but it also designates those within this category as unassimilable.⁹² These laws further showed the distinction between the assimilable Euro Americans and the unassimilable.

⁹¹ Spickard, 27.

⁹² Aoki, 9.

Chapter 3: The Switching of Fates (1900-1941)

In spite of the fact that Chinese immigrants had been looked at more unfavorably from 1850 to 1900 because they had been in the United States longer, the negative stereotyping also caught up with Japanese immigrants shortly after they arrived in the United States. In the period of 1900 to 1945, the images and terms used to portray East Asian immigrants became applied to all East Asians in general. However, as Japan gained more power, Americans resisted viewing Japanese as equals, first trying to portray Japan's true existence as a primitive and stagnant state. However, as Japan became more assertive, discourse began to push the image of Japan closer to that of the Yellow Peril. Chinese immigrants on the other hand, came to be regarded as less of a threat due to the decrease in Chinese immigrants and preoccupation with Japan.

Japanese Immigrants: the growing menace

In the first few years of the twentieth century, much of the prejudice against East Asian immigrants was focused on the Chinese. However, Japan's victory over Russia in the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War began to change the way that Japan and Japanese immigrants were viewed.

Japanese immigrants began to come under the same scrutiny as Chinese immigrants. Hunt notes that by the early 1900's, Japanese migrants were also faced with the same prejudice from nativists, coming from labor organizations and California's Democratic Party. He writes that "[t]he arguments previously marshaled against one set of Orientals, the Chinese, were easily deployed against another. The interest of free labor should be protected from "Asiatic corruption" and white morals defended against a corrupting race."⁹³ Paul Spickard notes that the "post-1900 drive to renew the Chinese Exclusion Act spilled over into more generalized protests against, and

⁹³ Hunt, 77.

calls for exclusion of, all Asian immigrants.”⁹⁴ Prejudices that were applied to Chinese immigrants also came to be applied to Japanese immigrants. Hunt comments that other dangers that concerned nativists were notions of Japanese seeking to defile the white women of California and intermarriage which would lead to the corruption of American civilization.⁹⁵ Ronald Takaki also mentions some of the inflammatory headlines that were published in *the Chronicle*, one of San Francisco’s most important newspapers, in 1905. Some of the headlines were:

JAPANESE A MENACE TO WHITE WOMEN
 THE YELLOW PERIL—HOW JAPANESE CROWD OUT THE WHITE RACE
 BROWN MEN AN EVIL IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
 BROWN ARTISANS STEAL BRAINS OF WHITES
 CRIME AND POVERTY GO HAND AND HAND WITH ASIATIC LABOR⁹⁶

These headlines and accusations not only specifically include Japanese in some practices that were associated with Chinese, such as being a menace to white women, but Japanese were also placed in the category of the horde of all Asian immigrants, such as competing for labor. Figure 3 shows, there is an illustration found in the May 11, 1978 edition of the *Wasp*. This illustration was created in response to anti-Chinese immigration and is meant to represent all of the ills that Chinese immigrants brought with them. In the top left had corner there is a Chinese immigrant at a brothel and in the upper right hand corner there is an image of a Chinese store owner selling opium to a Euro-American. The image in the bottom left shows Chinese coming in large numbers, which leads to the two images to the right of Chinese immigrants taking jobs that

⁹⁴ Spickard, 32.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ San Francisco *Chronicle*, February 13- March 13, 1905, in Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 116.

Euro-Americans could have, whether through creating their own businesses or being under the employment of white Euro-Americans.

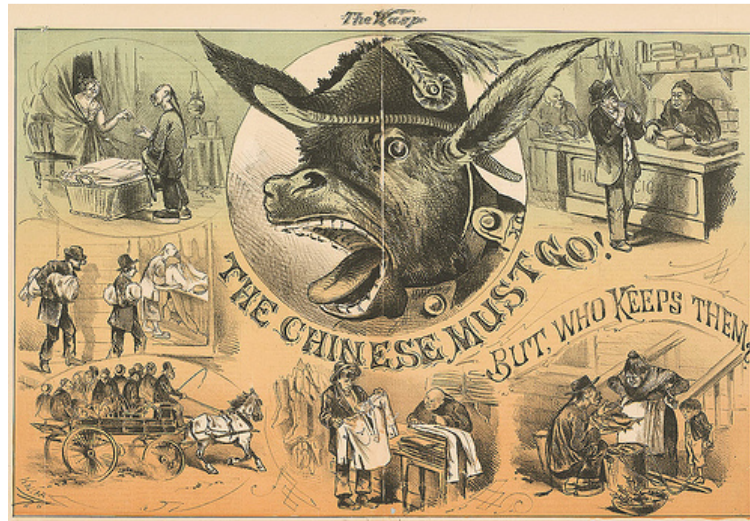


Figure 3: a picture featured in the *Wasp* in response to anti-Chinese agitation before the creation of the Chinese exclusion act⁹⁷

The “Orientals” Who Became Less “Oriental”

Perceptions began to change as people saw the Japanese “Orientals” as becoming less “Oriental.” Roger Daniels comments that in spite of the fact that Japanese laborers were once accepted by farmers in California, they were met with resistance beginning in 1903 when Japanese laborers began demanding higher wages. “Many growers remembered that the Chinese had been more docile and reliable.” Daniels continues that in 1909, the United States Immigration Commission noted that views of Chinese immigrants were improving because of the decline in the Chinese population; however, this improvement also came at the expense of

⁹⁷ “Category Archives: Chinese Stereotypes,” *Illustrating Chinese Exclusion*, <http://thomasnastcartoons.com/category/chinese-stereotypes/> (accessed April 1, 2015).

the declining opinions of the Japanese.⁹⁸ The Chinese were generally considered to be seen for their submissive, and now that the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was enacted, ending Chinese immigration to the United States, their “threat” of Chinese taking away jobs was not as much of a concern. Daniels adds an anecdote that shows the different reaction to Japanese workers: in response to Japanese laborers’ demands of higher wages, one farmer “complain[ed] about the ‘saucy, debonair Jap’ who wanted to be able to work ‘in a white starched shirt.’”⁹⁹ This comment reveals underlying tensions, as the farmer questioned the Japanese laborer’s right to work a white-collar job. Japanese workers who sought to gain more wealth, and achieve upward mobility through better jobs. Both alternatives would have challenged Euro-American supremacy within American society. In addition, the farmer’s suggests the Japanese worker was attempting to step out from underneath white overseers, and therefore becoming more “Western” and stepping outside of his assigned role as an “Oriental.”¹⁰⁰

The same movement away from the “Oriental character” was also happening in Japan. In spite of the fact that Japan was often praised as a Westernizing nation, there were also American beliefs about Japan that place the American-perceived “essence of Japan” squarely in the past. Sadao Asada notes some of the ideas that were projected about Japan into the minds of young Americans. He comments that “[f]lowerlike children, tiny paper houses, and quaint toys drew grade-school children into the world of make-believe. Japan was a topsy-turvy land: the people there not only wrote backward but upside down. The strangeness of this country made it all the more ‘wonderful.’” Asada continues that in spite of the fact that the Japanese were also viewed as the “Yankees of the Orient,” due to their modernizing reforms, the romanticized version of

⁹⁸ Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 109.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ This is not a phenomenon that just happened among Japanese immigrants. Chinese immigrants also incurred backlash when they attempted to move out from a submissive position, especially in the field of labor.

Japan resounded more due to the experience that many had contact with trinkets from Japan, such as dolls, fans, and postcards.¹⁰¹ Japan was presented as an Oriental wonder, and the differences between Japan and the United States were emphasized. Even Japan's modernizations that were made were not seen entirely due to Japanese initiative. Asada comments that many Americans saw Japan's modernizations as a miracle since they believed that before Commodore Perry's arrival, Japan had been an "entirely primitive country," and that America's influence had "rejuvenated" the nation, driving it to becoming more modernized.¹⁰² Asada further adds that in spite of the fact that many people marveled at Japan's modernization, it was often these same people who felt that due to its modernization, Japan was losing sight of her own "ancient integrity as she aped the West."¹⁰³ Japan's modernizations were seen as being mostly attributed to the United States, but in modernizing, Japan was losing its "Oriental" nature, unlike the United States, which progressed naturally to modernization.

Japan's modernization was not the only concern of many Americans. The beginning of the twentieth century also brought a large challenge to the status quo among Western and Eastern nations as the world witnessed an Asian nation overpowering a Western nation in the Russo-Japanese War.

The initial reaction to Japan's victory was at first ambiguous, but would later pick up a definite inflection of negativity. Ronald Takaki notes in his monograph *Strangers from a Distant Shore* that President Roosevelt had initially responded to Japan's victory positively, for not only had they displayed heroism, but they had achieved victory with "scrupulous courtesy and

¹⁰¹ Sado Asada, *Culture Shock and Japanese-American Relations: Historical Essays* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 30.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

friendliness.”¹⁰⁴ Michael Hunt adds that in spite of the fact that Roosevelt had entered the White house with the intent “to proclaim the Pacific an American lake and East Asia the nation’s new frontier,” he realized that his vision was too grandiose and instead he began to move toward “recognizing the dominant position Japan deserved as an advanced state and regional power.” Hunt continues that Roosevelt also saw Japan as a stabilizing factor in East Asia since Japan could keep China under control as well as act as a mentor.¹⁰⁵ To Roosevelt, Japan had proven that it could wield power and use it effectively and with dignity.

However, Roosevelt still had concerns about Japan’s growth in power. According to Zoltán Búzás, Roosevelt was also concerned that Japan would become hostile towards white races and Americans specifically. He thought that the Japanese were extremely warlike and there was no nation more dangerous.¹⁰⁶ As a result of the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War, there came a change in American opinions of Japan. Ariane Knüsel comments that when Japan emerged the victor in the Russo-Japanese war, tensions between Japan and the United States over the Far East increased leading to fears of a Japanese-led movement of Asian nations against white nations. These fears then influenced an increase in anti-Japanese movements and war scares.¹⁰⁷ However, these fears were not the same throughout the entire country. Zoltán Búzás notes the difference between perceptions of threat on the West Coast compared to the East Coast. Although the separate regions did not vary much in terms of prejudice against Japanese, they did vary in the strength of such prejudice. On the West Coast and in the South, prejudices were stronger. On the East coast, prejudices against Japanese were not as strong and were mainly

¹⁰⁴ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers*, 201

¹⁰⁵ Hunt, 132.

¹⁰⁶ Zoltán Búzás, “The Color of Threat: Race, Threat Perception, and the Demise of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902–1923),” *Security Studies* 22, no.4 (2013), 587.

¹⁰⁷ Knüsel, 160.

focused on Japanese aggression.¹⁰⁸ There were significantly fewer Japanese-Americans on the East Coast than were on the West Coast.

Although American views of China and Chinese immigrants were not always favorable, there was a definite improvement in American views compared to those of Japanese and Japanese immigrants. In spite of the fact that Chinese immigrants were only marginally viewed in a more favorable light until the 1930's, developments in the United States' relations with East Asia in the early 1900's began to change America's view of its relationship to China.

¹⁰⁸ Búzás, 588-589.

Chapter 4: Racial Divides: Conflict with Japan and Cooperation with China During WWII

One of the most memorable and darkest days in American history was undeniably the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. This was the action that drove the United States into entering WWII on the side of the Allied forces. During WWII, America faced both Asian and European enemies. Throughout this time period, the United States would focus on portraying a difference between its Asian enemy and European enemies. While noting the difference in the Asian threat, the United States also continued its trend of creating an Oriental “friend” and an Oriental “foe.” As I will argue, this contrast was made to show that Western power was still superior and the Asian threat could be tamed if brought under the Western influence.

China the Ally, Germany the Confused, and Japan the Beast

The attack on Pearl Harbor did not just signify an attack on the United States by another power, but it showed what could happen if Asian nations gained enough power to challenge Western dominance. This was once again shown by contrasting the “good Oriental” with the “bad Oriental,” while also separating the Japanese threat from the German threat. This separation of good and bad, east and west was also heavily apparent in American discourse. The characteristics that separated the Chinese and the Japanese were also attributed to Westernization. The fear of Japan’s power in WWII was also tinged with racial concern.

As described in Chapter 3, even before Pearl Harbor was attacked, there was a growing difference in American opinions of the Japanese and the Chinese, but the attack on America only furthered the gap between these two nations. Sucheng Chan notes that “[a] Gallup poll taken in 1942 showed that views of Chinese and Japanese had bifurcated. Respondents categorized the Chinese as ‘hardworking, honest, brave, religious, intelligent, and practical.’ Japanese on the

other hand were said to be ‘treacherous, sly, cruel, and warlike,’ though also ‘hardworking and intelligent.’”¹⁰⁹ The positive characteristics that were attributed to the Chinese were “good traits” that Americans espoused. The focus on Western traits in the Chinese was exemplified by Madame Chiang Kai-shek, who had connections to the West as well as had family members who were connected to the Chinese Nationalists, whom the United States supported. Ariane Knüsel notes that Madame Chiang, or Soong Meiling,

came from one of the most influential families in China. Her father had been a co-revolutionary of Sun Yat-sen, her sister Chingling married Sun in 1915, and her brother T.V. Soong was the finance minister of the Nationalist government... Soong Meiling went to the USA in 1907 and remained there until 1917 when she graduated from Wellesley College. In December 1927, she married Chiang Kai-shek, and soon afterwards became his advisor and translator.”¹¹⁰

Knüsel continues that Madam Chiang was the embodiment of an Americanized China. She spoke English with an American accent and picked up many American mannerisms due to the amount of time that she spent in the United States. In 1942, she came to the United States to receive medical treatment, and following the treatment, she made tours around the United States in order to promote support for the Chinese Nationalist government.¹¹¹ Knüsel comments, “News reels covered her tour in detail, and the US press hailed her as a modern Christian woman who was not only beautiful and loyal to her husband but also believed in the same values as Americans.”¹¹² In spite of the fact that Madame Chiang was not representative of the entirety of China, she was exactly how the United States wanted China and the Chinese to be portrayed.

The difference that was developing between American perceptions of China and Japan during WWII can be seen in many propaganda posters. Figures 4a and 4b show the differences in WWII propaganda pertaining to China and Japan. The posters portray both sides as Chan

¹⁰⁹ Chan, 121.

¹¹⁰ Knüsel, 182.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

describes as both “intelligent and hardworking,” but in very different ways. Figure 4a is a poster created sometime between 1941 and 1946. It depicts a Chinese soldier dressed in crisp uniform, giving him the look of someone who is prepared and follows orders. He is also with a woman and a child wearing worn-looking clothing. The woman’s left arm is bloody and is being held up by a sling, and the child, in spite of her worn-out clothing, she has a determined look on her face. All of the figures in the image look dedicated to their cause, and are working together, in this case possibly as a family. In comparison, figure 4b, also created in the 1940’s, shows the Japanese as hardworking and intelligent as well. However, the Japanese are portrayed in a more sinister way: The face of the figure in the center is shadowed, creating a menacing quality to his countenance, and all the men are among the faceless masses who are driven blindly by the influence of Japan, represented by the rising sun in the background.



Figure 4a) Posters depicting Chinese allies¹¹³ and **4b)** Japanese enemy.¹¹⁴

The differences between portrayals of the German threat compared to the Japanese menace are also striking. John Dower comments on how differently Japan’s intentions and the

¹¹³ This image was found in “China first to fight! : United China Relief participating in National War Fund,” *UNT Digital Library* <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc367/> (accessed March 20, 2015).

¹¹⁴ This image was found in “If You Worked As Hard And Fast As A Jap,” *Museum Syndicate* <http://www.museum syndicate.com/item.php?item=17402> (accessed April 5, 2015).

Japanese character were viewed. “German atrocities were known and condemned from an early date, but in keeping with their practice of distinguishing between the good and the bad Germans, Allied critics tended to describe these as “Nazi” crimes rather than behavior rooted in German culture or personality structure.”¹¹⁵ Dower notes the contrast of the Japanese, who were portrayed as having no equivalent of a “good German.” Instead those among the Allied nations “portrayed the Japanese as inherently inferior men and women who had to be understood in terms of primitivism, childishness, and collective mental and emotional deficiency.”¹¹⁶

At a very early stage in the conflict, when the purportedly inferior Japanese swept through Asia like a whirlwind and took several hundred Allied prisoners, another stereotype took hold: the Japanese as superhuman, possessed of an uncanny discipline and fighting skills. Subhuman, inhuman, lesser human, superhuman—all that was lacking in the perception of the Japanese enemy was a human like oneself.¹¹⁷

There was true “goodness” in the Germans from a Western viewpoint; those of the Germans who were Nazis were simply led astray from their true German nature. By contrast, there was no potential for “goodness” in the Japanese; instead, their difference from Western culture grew with their power.

The differences in portrayals of Germans and Japanese can be seen in many WWII era posters. Figure 5a is a poster that depicts a predicted German surrender in WWII compared to Germany’s previous surrender in WWI. In spite of the fact that both the WWI and WWII depiction of the German soldier are in shadow, they both are portrayed as humans. As humans, they recognize their mortality, and surrender when they know that their lives are at stake. In contrast, Figure 5b portrays the Japanese soldier as more beast-like.¹¹⁸ The soldier has a whisker-

¹¹⁵ John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 34.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ John Dower notes that Japanese were often portrayed as “apes and vermin” in order to convey a subhuman nature, See Dower, 9.

like moustache and a narrow, pointed face, causing him to look like a rodent. In a beast-like stance, the soldier has slung a nude white woman over his back in a primitive gesture. Adding to the subhuman qualities is the nature of the situation depicted in the background. There is turmoil in the background, accentuated by the bodies hanging from the ceiling, and the soldier, possibly acting on base needs, carries away a helpless female victim.



Figure 5a) the surrender of the German enemy¹¹⁹ compared with **5b)** a depiction of the Japanese enemy¹²⁰.

The Coalescing of the “Japanese Identity”

Pearl Harbor cemented the view of Japanese and Japanese-Americans in the views of Americans. The attack on Pearl Harbor antagonized the the relationship between Japan and the United States, but it succeeded in bringing China and the United States closer together. A Chinese American journalist commented that “‘WWII was the most important event of [his generation’s] times. For the first time we felt that we could make it in American Society.’”¹²¹ Those of Chinese ancestry were seen less as part of the “Yellow Peril” and more of allies now that both China and the United States were fighting a common enemy. Portrayals of Chinese-

¹¹⁹ This image was found in The National Archives, “Propaganda: Home Front,” *The Art of War* http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/prop/home_front/INF3_0140.htm (accessed March 22, 2015).

¹²⁰ This Image was found in “File:US propaganda Japanese enemy.jpg,” *Wikimedia Commons* http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US_propaganda_Japanese_enemy.jpg (accessed March 1, 2015).

¹²¹ Victor G. Nee and Brett de Barry Nee, *Longtime Californ’: A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), 154 quoted in Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 189.

Americans drastically improved following Pearl Harbor, and Chinese-Americans were become generally accepted by the American public as having traits similar to Euro-Americans. Doobo Shim comments that many movies began to portray Chinese-Americans in a favorable light; for example, such as *Dragon Seed* (1942) and *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo* (1944) began to portray Chinese Americans in a favorable light: “A remark by an American in *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo* demonstrates American feelings about the Chinese: ‘You’re our kind of people.’” Shim continues, noting that during WWII, the Office of War Information listed the Charlie Chan series on its list of “official anti-Japanese films since Charlie Chan was regarded as a ‘good Chinese American’ who worked well with the authorities.”¹²² Chinese-Americans were not only being portrayed favorably, but also as allies, aligning themselves with the plight of the nation they lived in.

However, the racial views of Chinese-Americans as “good Orientals” stemmed largely from the American alliance with China. Roger Daniels comments that the changes made in the attitudes of the American public had little to do with the Chinese American community, but more to do with “misperceptions about what was really going on in China.”¹²³ Create footnote Chiang Kai-shek and his wife, who had been educated in the United States, became symbols of the Chinese-American alliance.¹²⁴ Shim points out the fears that scholar Rose Hum Lee voiced in 1944. Lee was concerned over the short amount of time it took the American community to switch from vilifying Chinese-Americans to glorifying them, and she suggested that since these positive Chinese American portrayals were due to emotions, there was no concrete evidence to

¹²² Doobo Shim, “From Yellow Peril through Model Minority to Renewed Yellow Peril,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 22, no. 4 (October 1998): 391.

¹²³ Daniels, 189.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

predict how Chinese-Americans would be viewed ten years in the future.¹²⁵ Emotions connected to the growing disparity in mainstream American views of the Japanese compared to the Chinese aided in better views of Chinese-Americans.

The increase in negativity towards Japanese Americans was almost instantaneous with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Paul Spikard comments, “As soon as news of the attack [on Pearl Harbor] reached the West Coast, police surrounded Japanese neighborhoods.” The number of “dangerous aliens” arrested on the first day alone was 1,300, which increased to 5,000 by March. The people who the FBI took were often “Issei who looked like community leaders or tangible connections to Japan.”¹²⁶ Many Japanese Americans were concerned over being suspected of sabotage, so they got rid of anything that could suggest that they had strong connections to Japan. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, author of *Farewell to Manzanar*, remembers that the evening after Pearl Harbor, her father “burned the flag that he brought with him from Hiroshima thirty-five years earlier...He burned a lot of papers too, documents, anything that might suggest he still had some connection with Japan.”¹²⁷ To an investigator, a Japanese flag and documents linked to Japan may have suggested a nationalistic attachment to Japan and an attempt to commit sabotage, which makes burning these items very logical; however, many other items were burned. Monica Sone recounts her experience following Pearl Harbor. After hearing many family friends whose husbands were taken away by the FBI lament that one of the reasons why they were taken was because of too many Japanese possessions, the Sone family began to “feel uncomfortable with [their] Japanese books, magazines, wall scrolls, and knickknacks.” She comments, “I gathered together my well-worn Japanese language schoolbooks which I had been saving over a period of ten years with the thought that they might come in handy when I want to

¹²⁵ Shim, 392.

¹²⁶ Spikard, 93.

¹²⁷ Sone, 154-155.

teach Japanese to my own children.”¹²⁸ The concern was that any attachment to Japan, even if it was purely cultural and there was not a strong tie, could cause Japanese Americans to be suspected of sabotage.

Police were not the only people concerned about the loyalty of Japanese Americans. Spickard comments that by the end of January 1942 the attitude of the American public towards Japanese Americans had become one of “fear and hostility.”¹²⁹ On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 was signed, which gave power to the Secretary of War to “designate ‘military areas’ from which commanders could exclude anyone they chose.” In spite of the ambiguous wording of this order, it was clear that this was intended to exclude Japanese Americans.¹³⁰ These sentiments can also be found in some pieces of propaganda. In 1942, propaganda cartoon drawn by Theodor Seuss Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss, was released. This image, depicted in figure 6, highlights classic features of the Yellow Peril: masses of nearly identical Japanese immigrants are lined up to get explosives for when their homeland gives them the signal. The Japanese immigrants are portrayed like wolves in sheep’s clothing: they are dressed in Western-style attire, and yet they are awaiting orders from their “homeland.” This image also serves a purpose of uniting the Japanese that the United States are fighting abroad with the Japanese immigrants within America, and portraying them as one people who were still connected.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Spikard, 97.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 98.



Figure 6: a picture of a Japanese immigrant fifth column preparing while awaiting orders.¹³¹

The Japanese were a threat, and it is logical to believe that emigrants from a hostile nation could harbor intentions to harm or try to undermine a nation that is at war with the land of their ancestry; however in the case of Japanese and Japanese Americans during WWII, there was a distinct note of racism that accompanied the concern of the threat. Keith Aoki asserts that the Chinese were perceived as a “good” nationality, compared to the Japanese who were the “bad” nationality. Both the terms “Nip” and “Jap” served as pejoratives referring to Japanese both racially and nationally, whereas the word “Nazi” was the term for a “bad” German “and seemingly contemplated the existence of ‘good’ (presumably white) Germans (many of whom may have immigrated to the United States.

All Germans and German Americans (or Italians and Italian Americans) were not “race-ed” in the same way that Japanese and Japanese Americans were “race-ed.” Ethnicity, national allegiance and race literally intersected on the site of the Japanese and Japanese American body, requiring swift incarceration, strict containment, and distant spatial segregation to preserve the integrity of the “American” body politic.¹³²

¹³¹ This image was found in “Dr. Seuss’s Racist Anti-Japanese Propaganda (And His Apology),” *Tofugu*. <http://www.tofugu.com/2013/02/20/dr-seuss/> (accessed March 2, 2015).

¹³² Aoki, 39.

Although German and Italian-Americans also had ties to America's enemies, Japan still had a greater connection to the Yellow Peril. German and Italian-Americans at least had ties to Western ancestry and culture, whereas Japanese-Americans had none of those ties, leading to a greater perception of the Japanese and Japanese-Americans as "Others."

Chapter 5: Japan Bashing in the 1970s-early 1990s

I have established that many of the concerns of the United States about East Asia were focused on retaining supremacy over the East Asian region. Beginning during the occupation of Japan, American-Japanese trade relations began to grow and a friendship between the two nations emerged. However, during the second half of the Cold War, Japan once again became a concern in American foreign policy. Japan emerged as an economic power at a time when the United States was struggling economically. America's reactions to the emergence of an economically powerful Japan showed legitimate concerns over; however, representations of the Japanese were rife with Yellow Peril symbolism, showing that racial fears still possessed some degree of influence over American officials and over public portrayals within the media.

Emergence of Japanese Economic Power and the Question of Security

For the first several decades after World War II, the United States dominated economic relations with Japan. The U.S. economy was much larger than Japan's and Japan was dependent on the United States for national security. American economic and political dominance allowed the United States to control the agenda of bilateral relations, enabling the United States to force Japan to adopt economic and trade policies that reflected American interests. By the 1970s, however, Japan's relative economic power had grown, due to Japan's strong economic growth as well as American economic stagnation. This led to frictions between the two countries, as American leaders and business interests became increasingly concerned about Japan's potential to become an economic threat. From the 1970s to the mid-1990s, Japan's economic power rose, and the trade deficit between Japan and the United States became a source of contention in American discourse.

Economic tensions between the United States and Japan did not develop overnight, but grew over the span of about fifteen years. The tensions began in the mid-1950s with the growth of Japan's textile market. Michael A. Barnhart comments that Japan looked to America as a potential market. In fact, American laws which aided the Japanese textile industry, for example through the "provision of cheap raw cotton to...Japanese rivals under PL [Public Law] 480, aid in procuring textile manufacturing machinery through U.S. Export-Import Bank credits, and official American procurement (usually military) of made-in-Japan textile under mutual security programs."¹³³ The United States helped the Japanese economy to grow by allowing Japan to have trade benefits. However, the trade benefits given to Japan were also a source of concern for domestic producers of textiles. Barnhart continues, noting that concerns about the trade benefits for Japan increased when the Congress passed a congressional bill in 1954 "proposing reductions in American textile tariffs. It might have been an acceptable to help a Cold War ally, but it was quite another to do so at the expense of American manufacturers in their home market."¹³⁴

The change in economic growth between the United States and Japan spelled possible disaster for the American economy, and the trade deficit exacerbated the tension between the two nations. Catherine A. Luther notes that "[t]he period beginning in the mid-1970s and ending in the mid-1990s represented a time when the political economic tides dramatically changed course for the United States and Japan. It was an era marked by the rising economic force of Japan and the steady loss of international power by the United States."¹³⁵ Japan's economic rise came at a

¹³³ Michael Barnhart, "From Hershey Bars to Motor Cars: America's Economic Policy Toward Japan, 1945-1976," in *Partnership: The United States and Japan*, ed. Akira Iriye and Robert A. Wampler (New York: Kodansha International, 2001), 205.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Catherine A. Luther, *Press Images, Identity, and Foreign Policy: A Case Study of U.S.-Japan Relations from 1955-1995* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 136-134.

time when the United States was becoming more vulnerable. Barnhart comments that by 1970 there was a definite trade surplus with Japan.¹³⁶

Japan's emergence as a competitor on the automotive market also concerned many Americans. Thomas Zeiler comments that due to "the collapse of Chrysler Corporation and the two oil crises," demand grew for Japan's more fuel efficient cars. Between 1978 to 1988, the number of Japanese cars made in America jumped from zero to 695,000.¹³⁷

There is much truth to the fact that Japan was becoming a source of economic competition, if not becoming an economic threat. However, the way that discourse and rhetoric portrayed the United States- Japanese relations was far different than just as economic competitors.

Japan the Eternal Pupil

From the 1970s through the 1990s, U.S. foreign policy and the representation of Japan in the media portrayed the United States as the superior power, in spite of its economic decline, and Japan as the student. These beliefs are displayed in ways that question Japan's ability to truly wield its power, as well as question Japan's foreign policy approach. In a sense, Americans regarded Japan from an Orientalist point of view that displayed where Japan belonged: in an inferior position to that of the United States.

Part of the reason for American friction with Japan was due to the fact that the United States held on to the image of Occupied Japan. Ryuzo Sato, author of the book *The Chrysanthemum and the Eagle: The Future of U.S.-Japan Relations* asserts that the negativity towards Japan at this time stemmed from the fact that American officials were certain that they had made Japan into a clone of the United States; however:

¹³⁶ Barnhart, 216.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 227.

In the course of the subsequent Japan-U.S. negotiation...it soon became clear that far from having been recreated in America's image, Japan had emerged as a country poles apart from the United States. The illusion and its betrayal...underlie the frustrations of the American people in their dealings with Japan.¹³⁸

Sato's assertion suggests that America expected to play a paternal role with Japan, but instead Japan had grown up like a rebellious child and taken a different stance than its supposed "parent." As described above, the Japanese did in fact rely a great deal on the United States for economic support in the early post-war period. Michael A. Barnhart notes some of the economic contributions that the United States made in Japan, such as giving relief and recovery aid as well as credit lines for textile industries.¹³⁹ During the latter half of the Cold War, the United States still wanted to see Japan as the nation that needed its help rather than the world power that it was becoming.

The unwillingness of the United States to give up its status and be surpassed by Japan can be seen in the portrayals of the economic conflict within the media. Catherine A. Luther assesses the appearance of national identity within Japanese and American media during this time in her book *Press Images, National Identity, and Foreign Policy: A Case Study of U.S.-Japan Relations from 1955-1999*. Luther comments that in spite of the fact that the American media reported great deal about America's stagnation, such as "[t]he growing deficit, the decline in U.S. exports, high unemployment rates, and problems associated with the United States' production capabilities," the media also portrayed the America as "inherently strong or as having the ability to recapture strength."¹⁴⁰ The rhetoric of the articles presented the United States as having the ability to regain its former strength, as well as reflected a "pro-democratic/anti-communist"

¹³⁸ Sato Ryuzo, *The Chrysanthemum and the Eagle: the Future of U.S.-Japan Relations* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 1-2.

¹³⁹ Barnhart, 203.

¹⁴⁰ Catherine A. Luther, *Press Images, Identity, and Foreign Policy: A Case Study of U.S.-Japan Relations from 1955-1995* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 138.

stance that the United States was still the “torch-bearer for democracy.” Continuing with the anti-communist concern, Luther notes that one article from *The New York Times*, which appeared in September 1975, comments on the responsibilities which the United States had due to its position as a leader in the international community. Another article featured in *The New York Times* expressed concern over the possibility of the withdrawal of American presence from the Pacific, stating that withdrawing from the Pacific could cause instability within the region, and moreover, the United States would be giving up its responsibilities to the international community.¹⁴¹ Portrayals of the United States solidly defended that America was the protector of the world, and to give up its influence, in spite of economic hardship, would be catastrophic. In spite of the fact that there is merit in the fact that the United States did play a large role in the international community, the view presented by these *New York Times* articles was that the United States was the only hope of preserving democracy, and America’s version of democracy, within the international realm.

In spite of Japan’s growing economic success, Americans doubted Japan’s ability to fulfill the duties that came with becoming a “great power” and portrayed Japan as doubting in its own abilities. Luther notes an article in *The New York Times* which featured quotes from a speech given to a Japanese audience in Japan by American Ambassador to Japan, James D. Hodgson. Hodgson congratulated Japan on its economic achievements, but then further added that the United States had to take into consideration certain aspects of Japan’s economy as well as its position within the international community.¹⁴² Hodgson further expanded:

I have in mind such things as the vulnerability of your economy to external forces, your limited indigenous natural resources, your focal Northeast Asia location near

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 138-139.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 141.

“superpower” territory, your acute allergy to external surprise, your Asian interests and your rather residual sense of insecurity.¹⁴³

Hodgson portrayed Japan as timid, uncertain of its abilities, and located in a particularly precarious region from both an economic and military standpoint. Others accused Japan of being unassertive and waiting for directions. Luther mentions one article from the 1990’s in which the journalist portrayed Japan as immature, commenting that in spite of being a global power Japan was still looking to other nations for advice on what it should do rather than deciding for itself.¹⁴⁴ Japan was still seen as the student, looking to its “superiors” for advice on what it should do in the tumultuous world of international relations.

Through the 1960s and 1970s the United States, in spite of being economically weakened, clung to its “primacy” on the international scene. Japan, although gaining in economic strength, was portrayed as a novice, incapable of truly handling itself in a position of power in the international community. This image calls back residual notions of an Orientalist view of Japan, showing Japan as unable to achieve the same power as the West. In the eyes of the America, if Japan was not in its position as a pupil, then Japan might aspire to take a more powerful, and therefore, a more dangerous position.

From Economic Betrayal to Investment Invasion

From the 1970s through the 1990s, America undoubtedly was facing increased economic competition with Japan, and this was portrayed in the media and in political rhetoric. However, the way that the media and politicians decided to portray this competition sometimes hinted at Japan as not just an economic competitor, but also a racial threat. The difficulties in relations with Japan took on more than just a sense of competition: the portrayals of the economic struggle

¹⁴³ Richard Holloran, *Japan: Images and Realities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 10 quoted in Catherine A. Luther, *Press Images, Identity, and Foreign Policy: A Case Study of U.S.-Japan Relations from 1955-1995* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 141.

¹⁴⁴ Luther, 142.

became associated with war. The Japanese were not only presented as being duplicitous enemies, but there were also similarities to depictions of Japanese during WWII.

Economically, the United States had many quarrels with Japan due to different perceptions of each other's economic practices, but at times the differences escalated into accusations of unfairness. One of the most prevalent complaints in the United States was over Japan's economic model, which was built on a strong connection between the government and businesses. This connection was often referred to as "Japan Inc." There were varying degrees of how negatively this model was characterized, ranging from simply "unique" to potentially nefarious. Ellis S. Kraus notes some of the perceptions of Japanese institutions in his article "Media Coverage of U.S.-Japanese Relations." From the late 1980s a school of thought emerged called Revisionism. This school of thought "finds Japanese institutions as "unique and fundamentally different from American institutions and economic theory."¹⁴⁵ The uniqueness of Japan's economic institutions would also become associated with Japanese threat.

Robert A Wampler comments that "[t]he sense that Japan was taking advantage of the United States was also driven by one key tenet of the revisionists—the charge that in its drive to be number one, Japan was not playing by the same rules as the United States or other Western countries."¹⁴⁶ Catherine Luther confirms this idea, commenting that many news items overlooked cultural reasons for the closely linked relations between the Japanese government and businesses, and instead associated the difference with "the less than virtuous character of the nation or people," sometimes referring the Japanese as "neurotic," "untrustworthy," or even

¹⁴⁵Ellis S. Kraus, *Media in Politics* (University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 259.

¹⁴⁶ Robert A. Wampler, "Reversals of Fortune? Shifting U.S. Images of Japan as Number One, 1979-2000," in *Partnership: The United States and Japan*, ed. Akira Iriye and Robert A. Wampler (New York: Kodansha International, 2001), 267.

“Asian devils.”¹⁴⁷ These accusations directly attacked the Japanese people, asserting that the Luther continues, these pejorative terms continued to increase during the 1980s into the 1990s.¹⁴⁸

Figure 7 draws a parallel between the attack on Pearl Harbor and the economic competition between the United States and Japan for auto sales. In the bottom left of the image is a destroyer with the word “Detroit” written upon it. The larger depiction in the center of the image is a Japanese car, which has features on it associated with the stereotypes of Japanese people: the thin windshield wipers of the car form slanted eyes, and the car’s grill has been replaced with lips and very large teeth. Portions of the car are also bent out to form wings so that the car resembles a plane. The rising sun in the background also gives the sense of blind loyalty to Japan, as was seen in figure 4b.

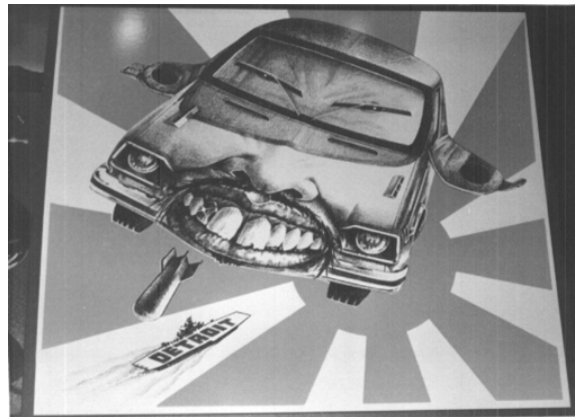


Figure 7: racially charged image of a Japanese car bombing Detroit¹⁴⁹

Was the portrayal of Japan’s economic institutions as “unique” correct? Elis S. Kraus comments that in fact the revisionist portrayal of Japanese institutions as “unique” may actually be correct on the revisionist stance that Japanese institutions were are different than American institutions. “The problem is that insofar as the American media compare Japan to only the

¹⁴⁷ Luther, 143-4.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 144.

¹⁴⁹This image was found in Ken Choy, “Yellow Peril: Enduring Through the Ages,” *Ken Choy’s Posts* <http://transition.hyphenmagazine.com/blog/archive/2014/02/yellow-peril-enduring-through-ages> (March 28, 2015).

United States, they may also be giving false impression of both nations: the former as the deviant and the latter as the norm.” Kraus further explains that Japanese institutions, while being different from the United States are actually more similar to European economic institutions.¹⁵⁰

Japan’s investments in the United States also caused much distress as Japan began to invest in iconic American landmarks and companies. Zeiler notes that after the devaluation of the dollar by thirty percent following the Plaza Accord in 1985, Japan began to invest in American assets, such as golf courses, hotels, and companies. These purchases included Rockefeller Center by Mitsubishi in 1989, Columbia pictures by Sony, and Westin Hotels, which was purchased by Aoki.¹⁵¹ In 1991, Matsushita Electrical Industrial Company purchased MCA, an “entertainment conglomerate,” for \$6.6 billion, which also included “commercial rights in Yosemite National Park.” Japanese investors also purchased Pebble Beach Golf Course in Monterey, California.¹⁵² Many Americans were wary of Japanese investment. The effect of Japanese investment on America’s “war mentality,” Zeiler adds, was negative. Reports, studies, and even movies created portrayed “Japan as a menace,” and although there was also general resentment towards any foreigner, Japan’s method of investment, seeking “vertical integration and yen-based profit,” was a harsh blow against America’s idea of independence.¹⁵³

“This year when they turn on the lights of that Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center,” announced Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut in 1989, “we Americans are going to have to come to grips with the reality that this great national celebration in [sic] actually occurring on Japanese property.”¹⁵⁴

Lieberman’s quote is reminiscent of some of the fears of Americans during WWII insofar as it reflected a fear that American culture was under threat from Japanese investors. During

¹⁵⁰ Kraus, 268.

¹⁵¹ Thomas W. Zeiler, “Business is War in U.S.-Japanese Economic Relations, 1977-2001,” in *Partnership: The United States and Japan*, ed. Akira Iriye and Robert A. Wampler (New York: Kodansha International, 2001)240.

¹⁵² Zeiler, 241.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 241.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

WWII, fears of Japanese occupation abounded. Figure 8, created by Dr. Seuss, depicts the faces of Adolph Hitler's and General Hideki Tojo carved on an American mountain, presumably Mt. Rushmore, replacing the famous faces of American presidents. The words within the cartoon, "Don't Let Them Carve THOSE Faces on Our Mountains" symbolizes a threat to rewrite of American history. Similarly, to many Americans, this is what the buying of American franchises and commercial areas symbolized.



Figure 8: cartoon created by Dr. Seuss during WWII which parallels concerns of a Japanese invasion.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ This image was found in Maria Papova, "Dr. Seuss World War II Political Propaganda Cartoons," *Brain Pickings*, <http://www.brainpickings.org/2012/08/10/dr-seuss-wartime-propaganda-cartoons/> (accessed March 20, 2015).

Chapter 6: Reviving the Image of “Red China”

(1990’s – Present)

This chapter will focus on economic and ideological concerns surrounding China. I will argue that in the media, China has been portrayed as the “Communist Other,” harkening back both to Orientalist assumptions of Western ideological superiority as well as to parallel concerns about a potential Asian threat. Many of the cases that I will mention present concern over the differences between and China’s communist institutions compared to Western democracies. The media as well as politicians used images of Communist China in hopes of spurring support or changing the national agenda. Although there were concerns about China’s military expansion within this time, I will focus on China’s representation as a Communist Other. Other representations of China in the media, mainly campaign advertisements have taken the Orientalist perspectives of superiority and escalated them to reflect fear of a coming Yellow Peril.

China as the “Communist Other”

There have been many representations of China in the media which have depicted concern over the socialist government in China and the potential negative implications of its “expansion.” I am emphasizing “expansion” here because each of these cases views expansion in a different way and with different parameters. In some cases, the fear is of China’s crackdown on democracy within its own national boundaries and potential for spreading communist influence to other non-Western nations. America’s response to this was not truly a fear of being overtaken by China, but concerns of an alarming growth of the People’s Republic of China. These representations of China as the “Communist Other” represent China as an Oriental inferior and a looming Yellow Peril.

American concerns about China grew after the protests that occurred at Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989. Michael G. Kulma comments that perceptions of China in the United States changed after the June 4 massacre at Tiananmen Square. “The incident started as a student movement to protest the blacklisting of the long-loved leader Hu Yaobang. It turned into what was seen by the outside world as a pro-democracy movement.”¹⁵⁶ However, the movement was not necessarily as pro-democratic as it was portrayed in American media. Oliver Turner comments in his monograph *American Images of China: Identity, Power, Policy* that Chinese demonstrators had presented demands of democracy and economic reforms to the Chinese government, as well as erected a statue called the Goddess of Democracy which was reminiscent of the Statue of Liberty. Many Americans took these signs of a movement towards “free China,” but Americans tended to associate the movement as towards liberal democracy rather than a democracy in general. “The majority of participants demanded an end to corruption, nepotism, and economic disparity, rather than Western-style democratic elections.”¹⁵⁷ Patricia Ebrey adds to this, noting some of the democratic reforms demanded of the government: “Make officials disclose their incomes and assets! Renounce the use of mass political campaigns! Abolish prohibitions against street protests! Permit journalists to report protest activities!”¹⁵⁸ As Ebrey and Kulma demonstrate, the protesters did not demand that the Chinese government necessarily switch to democracy and initiate more democratic features, such as elections, but instead were intent on making the government pay more attention to the needs and rights of the people. American assumption of protesters’ demands and goals were unrepresentative of reality, seeing too much of a movement towards what Americans viewed as democracy and not towards

¹⁵⁶ Michael G. Kulma, “The Evolution of U.S. Images of China: A Political Psychology Perspective of Sino-American Relations,” *World Affairs* 162, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 84.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Cambridge Illustrated History: China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 341.

Chinese views of democracy. This assumption would later influence the disappointment of Americans.

The images in American media of the Tiananmen Square massacre also influenced American perceptions of a growing People's Republic of China. Kulma explains the influence that media, especially television had upon American opinions.

Images of the students camped out in Tiananmen Square were only as far away as the nearest television set...CNN fed images of China into U.S. living rooms. No one who watched can forget the protester lying in the street blocking the path of advancing tanks. The horrors of the crackdown emblazoned on our minds the image of a barbaric land. China seemed to pose a threat to everything that America stood for: democracy, capitalism, and freedom.¹⁵⁹

From a postcolonialist perspective, Americans were mostly viewing the situation in terms of the superiority of Western culture: the Chinese government, supporting “non-democratic” ideology, was brutally suppressing its own citizens who were clamoring for American-style democracy. Even if these images did not cause Americans to perceive China's actions as a resurgence of the Yellow Peril, the images probably called forth Orientalist notions of China as a “barbaric” and backwards place.

The feelings of American ties to this attempted revolution did not die as time went on. Stanley Lubman notes a comment made by Democratic congressman Sherrod Brown of Ohio who commented during a debate on establishing Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China on the link between the demonstrators in Tiananmen Square to the United States

The men and women who gave their lives for freedom in Tiananmen Square in Beijing and those who are still languishing in Chinese prisons are in many ways the heirs to the legacy of our [the American] founding fathers. In the days leading up to their slaughter, they quoted Jefferson, not Mao. Their source of inspiration was not Mao's Little Red Book, but our Statue of Liberty.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Kulma, 85.

¹⁶⁰ 145 Cong. Rec. H. 6412, July 26, 1999 quoted in Stanley Lubman, “The Dragon as Demon: Images of China on Capitol Hill,” *Center for the Study of Law and Society Jurisprudence and Social Policy Program* (March 4, 2004) <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/4099x6f8> (accessed April 7, 2015).

While Chinese demonstrators may have been influenced to a certain degree by an American ideal of democracy, Congressman Brown portrayed the protestors as heavily tied to the United States, almost to the point that it was purely American ideology which had driven them to make their demands heard. From a postcolonialist view, this statement presents an assumption that the West, and in this case the United States, can be the only motivator for democracy, and that other regional forms of democracy do not exist.

Concerns of the spread of PRC influence to other nations also caused many to view China through an Orientalist lens. China's aid to other nations was also questioned, and was viewed as backwards, inferior, and insidious when compared to the methods of the United States.

The Economist, expressing concern for China's investments in Africa, reflects Western fear:

Diplomats and pundits, for their part, fear that the West is "losing" Africa and other resource-rich regions. China's sudden prominence, according to this view, will reduce the clout of America, Europe and other rich democracies in the developing world. China will befriend ostracized regimes and encourage them to defy international norms. Corruption, economic mismanagement, repression, and instability will proliferate. If this baleful influence easily spreads too widely, say the critics, the 'Washington consensus' of economic liberalism and democracy will find itself in competition with a 'Beijing consensus' of state-led development and despotism.¹⁶¹

The Economist essay offers the view that China supports governments and practices which the West does not support, reinforcing corruption and authoritarian rule in order to secure the resources that China's booming economy needs. As such, China is accused of undermining the efforts which America and other democracies have made to promote economic growth and political stability in African nations. From a postcolonialist stance, *The Economist* is asserting

¹⁶¹ "A Ravenous Dragon: A Special Request on China's Quest for Resources," *The Economist* <http://www.economist.com/node/10795714> (accessed April 2, 2015).

that the only way that African nations can be helped or “fixed” is through Western democratic intervention, which further creates a separation between the “West” and the “East.”

Some also questioned China’s intentions in expanding its ties with developing countries. In “Beyond Myths, Lies, and Stereotypes: The Political Economy of a ‘New Scramble for Africa,’” Alison J. Ayers notes concerns that emerged over China’s growing interest in Africa. One fear was that China was not necessarily interested in the welfare or domestic issues of the African nations that it was aiding, but instead only sought to aid these African nations in order to gather resources for the rapidly growing Chinese economy, compared to Western interests, which sought to help and reform African nations.¹⁶² While China may have a large self-interest strengthening ties to select African nations, Ayers and other postcolonialists would argue that the portrayal of the West as being the sole supporter of African welfare compared to non-Western nations neglects a history of non-Western nations’ submission to Western forces. This new implication of Western nations “aiding” in the “improvement” of African nations is only another attempt to justify Western dominance.

The way China is compared to other nations also distorts China’s actual role. As Ayers further comments, in terms of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Western nations are still the dominant investors in Africa, “account[ing] for three-quarters of FDI in 2009, compared with only one-fifth from ‘developing’ economies.”¹⁶³ Furthermore, China is not the only “developing” nation to invest in Africa since South Korea, Taiwan, Brazil, and Turkey do as well. “Conventional accounts of the ‘China threat’ habitually neglect the role and extent of these other ‘emerging’ powers’ interaction with Africa, thereby heightening fears about China as a singular

¹⁶² Ayers, 232.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 230.

(‘rogue’) actor and specific threat in Africa.”¹⁶⁴ In only focusing upon China’s, the larger context is conveniently ignored, allowing the isolation of China as an actor in Africa to foster a portrayal of China to be portrayed as a uniquely selfish actor seeking narrow spoils.

Some media sources and government officials have also become afraid of the potential for China to seek spoils in the United States. The United States government and citizens resisted the purchase of American companies and areas by Chinese companies due to the association with socialism. One such case was that of the port of Long Beach. According to Matthew Kilpinen Lorscheider, Long Beach port was once a large navy complex, which was closed in 1990 and then reused.¹⁶⁵ In April of 1996, the Port of Long Beach leased 130 acres of land to the Chinese Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO). Prior to the lease, two chances were offered for the “public to voice their concerns,” but in spite of the continuing coverage in the local newspaper, the *Long Beach Press-Telegram*, there was “no serious opposition” given.¹⁶⁶ Even though the local newspaper of Long Beach voiced opinions against COSCO’s lease of the port, the public did not necessarily feel the need to react to the lease. However, attitudes towards the lease changed quickly. On April 14th, 1996, the *Press-Telegram* featured an article stating that the Port of Long Beach fit the criteria to be designated as a National Historic Landmark, noting that the Naval Station played a role in WWII and was designed by Paul Revere Williams, a Los Angeles architect.¹⁶⁷ Lorscheider comments, “[t]he Press-Telegram’s article went on to mention that the historic structures were to be razed to make way for the COSCO facility, with the writer being sure to mention that the shipping company’s owners were ‘The People’s Republic of China.’

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Matthew Kilpinen Lorscheider, “Reinventing Long Beach: The Fight for Space and Place in Post-Cold War Long Beach, 1990-1999,” (Master’s Thesis, California State University, 2012), 2.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 103-104.

¹⁶⁷ Bill Hillburg, “A Belated Sense of History,” Long Beach Press-Telegram, April 14, 1996, C1, quoted in Matthew Kilpinen Lorscheider, “Reinventing Long Beach: The Fight for Space and Place in Post-Cold War Long Beach, 1990-1999,” (Master’s Thesis, California State University, 2012), 105.

While the red-baiting stops there, this simple use of semantics prefaced the Red Scare element of the preservation fight that emerged over the next year.¹⁶⁸ In contrasting the meaning of the port to American history against the new communist Chinese ownership of the port, the author of the article gave the impression of a cultural site that was to be overtaken by a power that had once been an enemy to the United States.

Another case of concern over sale of an American company occurred in 2005 with the proposed purchase of the United Oil Company of California (Unocal) by the Chinese National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC). CNOOC offered a winning bid of \$18.5 billion over Chevron Texaco's bid of \$17.1 billion, and while the Unocal board of directors was making final preparations to finalize the sale, CNOOC withdrew its bid, stating that political opposition and changes that were attempted to be made in the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States caused CNOOC to fear that Unocal would be a risky investment.¹⁶⁹ The political opposition noted was "around a series of concerns raised by U.S. policymakers, mainly members of congress."¹⁷⁰ Although this situation does not sound racial or ideological in nature, James A Dorn highlights some of the comments and actions of officeholders suggest otherwise made by officeholders at the time:

Frank Gaffney Jr., president of the Center for Security Policy, told the House Armed Services Committee that the sale of Unocal Corp. to CNOOC, Ltd, ... a Hong Kong-based subsidiary of China National Offshore Oil Company, "would have adverse effects on the economic and national security interests of the United States." He pointed to "the folly of abetting Communist China's effort to acquire more of the world's relatively finite energy resources" and warned of "the larger and ominous Chinese strategic plan of which this purchase is emblematic."¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Lorscheider, 106.

¹⁶⁹ Luca Schicho, "Pride and Prejudice: How the Financial Crisis Made Us Reconsider SWFs," *Goettingen Journal of International Law* 2, no 1 (2010): 73.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ James A. Dorn, "U.S.-China Relations in the Wake of CNOOC," *Policy Analysis* 553 (November 2, 2005): 2.

This statement begins with a legitimate concern over economic and national security which could be applied in a situation with many other nations, but then Gaffney begins to specify his fear. From a postcolonialist stance, Gaffney's mention of China as communist portrays China not only as the "other" but also as adhering to an ideology to which the United States is largely opposed. Poststructuralists would also look at some of the negative connotations of the words used, such as "abetting" and "ominous," which paint the picture of a foreboding future of Sino-American relations should China win its bid on Unocal. To let China's winning bid go through would be inadvertently, if not deliberately aid China with its potentially nefarious plans, including China's wanton disregard for the global environment.

In Bed with the Enemy: The use of Anti-Chinese Fear

Campaign advertisements often try to cater to public perceptions and fears. In the past few decades, politicians have paid attention to the growing concerns about economic competition with China. The representations of negativity towards China portray not only Orientalist stereotypes, but also the fear of a coming economic Yellow Peril.

In recent years, campaign ads have shown any association with China in a negative light. Dylan Yeats, co-author of *Yellow Peril!: An archive of Anti-Asian Fear*, comments that the phenomena of political competitors using associations with China to discredit their competitors has been used since the late 1990s. Yeats explains an incident that occurred prior to the 2000 elections. In March 1999, *The New York Times* published leaked information that was released by the Cox Commission. Following allegations from Republican Senator Fred Thompson that "improper Democratic contributions accounting was part of a Chinese plot to purchase influence in Washington...Newt Gingrich and House Republicans convened a commission under California Republican Christopher Cox to expand the investigation of 'Chinagate' to

espionage.”¹⁷² Yeats continues that the initial leaked reports, later found to be fabricated, made the accusation that an unnamed Chinese American working at Los Alamos had disclosed nuclear information to China. This led *The New York Times* to criticize the Clinton Administration for being lax and allowing the obvious “Chinese spy” to work in order to preserve good relations with China.¹⁷³ If these issues had been real and not invented, they could be grave concerns to the United States both economically and militarily. However, this distasteful act by government officials used fabricated race-centered lies in order to discredit the Clinton administration, and also gave the public a reason to be concerned about potential threats from China.

Although there are real concerns about economic competition with China, there have also been many attempts to scare the American public into choosing their political leaders wisely due to the fear of lax policies that could allow China to undermine the U.S. economy.¹⁷⁴ These campaign ads show China as not only a Yellow Peril, but also contrast against an Orientalist view of China.

One campaign advertisement that mixes racial undertones into its message is the “Chinese Professor” campaign advertisement. Yeats notes that “The Chinese Professor” advertisement was created by the “Political Action Committee...[and was] first released during the 2010 Midterm elections and then again in the final weeks of Republican Mitt Romney’s flailing 2012 presidential election bid.”¹⁷⁵ It is 2030 AD, and a Chinese college professor teaching in Beijing is shown approaching his class. The professor is dressed in a Mao suit, and

¹⁷² Dylan Yeats, “Chinese Professors,” in *Yellow Peril: an Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*, ed. John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats (New York: Verso, 2014), 268

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 269.

¹⁷⁴ Mackenzie Weinger, a journalist for Politico.com notes nine campaign advertisements which feature varying degrees of anti-China sentiment. There are advertisements created to promote the campaigns of both Republicans and Democrat candidates and parties. The list of sponsors contains political candidates such as Mike Spaynard (R.), Rep. Zack Space (D.- OH), Senator Harry Reid (D.-NV) see in Mackenzie Weinger, “9 China-Slamming Campaign Ads,” *Politico* (February 14, 2012) <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0212/72834.html> (accessed April 12, 2015).

¹⁷⁵ Yeats, 267.

the lecture hall is adorned with communist images, such as a large portrait of Mao, which can be seen in Figure 9. The class begins with the professor asking, “Why do great nations fail?” He then gives an explanation:

The Ancient Greeks...the Roman Empire...the British Empire...and the United States of America. They all made the same mistakes turning their backs on the principles that made them great. America tried to spend and tax itself out of a great recession. Enormous so-called “stimulus” spending, massive changes to health care, government take overs of private industries, and crushing debt. Of course, we owned most of their debt...so now they work for us. [Followed by laughter.]¹⁷⁶

This campaign advertisement paints a disparity between democratic America and Communist China, emphasizing fears of a coming Yellow Peril, but also portraying Western supremacy over China. The advertisement serves as a warning to viewers about the perils associated with stepping away from liberal democracy. In the beginning of the advertisement, the professor makes the comment that what made each of the empires fail was that they had turned their backs on the “principles that made them great.” This statement associates “greatness” with Western traditions, and therefore places China’s status below Western nations. This becomes more apparent when the reasons for the failure of America are listed. “Health care, government takeovers of private industries,” and debt that was exacerbated by “stimulus spending” are the reasons given for the fall. These policies, referencing a left-leaning agenda, draw parallels between the practices of China and those of American leaders who favor more socialist ideals, which contrast against the Republican rhetoric of the advertisement. The principles that brought the West to greatness are assumed to be the opposite of those that are associated with China. Overall, the message implies a larger statement about the current Sino-American struggle

¹⁷⁶ Citizens Against Government Waste, “Chinese Professor,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTSQozWP-rM>

The scenario presented also portrays a sneaky Chinese victory. China did not win this imagined battle through working hard, but instead simply by holding American debt. As I have explained in earlier chapters, Asians were often viewed as sneaky and treacherous. The images depicted around the lecture hall also bring forth memories of the relatively recent past when China was the enemy of the United States.



Figure 9: “The Chinese Professor” campaign advertisement hinting at a threat from the PRC¹⁷⁷

In another campaign advertisement for Michigan Republican Pete Hoekstra in 2012, Hoekstra portrays Asian nations in a negative light while asserting the claim that his opponent Debbie Stabenow is not financially responsible. This ad, which can be seen in figure 10, begins with the camera panning over a rice paddy while Asian-sounding music plays in the background. A woman dressed in yellow riding her bike in between rice paddies. She comes to a stop in front of the camera and begins to speak, saying:

Thank you Michigan senator Debbie ‘Spend it Now.’ Debbie spend so much American money, you borrow more and more from us. Your economy get very weak, ours get very good. We take your jobs. Thank you Debbie ‘Spend it Now.’¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ This is a picture taken from Citizens Against Government Waste, “Chinese Professor,” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTSQozWP-rM> (accessed March 15, 2015).

¹⁷⁸ Hawkeytown, “Racist Pete Hoekstra SuperBowl Ad,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f69VmlgmhOk> (accessed March 15, 2015).

There are many aspects of this commercial which relate to both Orientalism and Yellow Peril fears. One notable feature of this advertisement that fits within the category of “Orientalism” is the broken English that the actor uses. Another Orientalist aspect is the background setting for the advertisement. The scene is set in a very rural area, which brings forth Orientalist notions of Asian primitiveness. The woman riding the bicycle is in a rural agricultural area where one solitary man is farming his rice paddy. This image serves as reminder of previous Orientalist notions of China as a primitive country, in need of Western assistance in order to become modernized. This contrast between Orientalist notions and concerns of economic overthrow serve to enhance the horror of the perceived threat. The kind of threat that China presents is not that of an advanced nation, but rather an agricultural country, which one would not normally think would be able to overthrow a modern nation like the United States. In this sense, China’s rise to power through the unwise spending of Americans, like the advertisement featuring the Chinese professor, is portrayed as underhanded and sneaky rather than using “legitimate” means of attaining power. Lastly, the background serves as a suggestion of how Asian nations should exist: in a state that is beneath the United States.

The timing of this campaign advertisement is also suggestive. Peter Hays Gries notes that Pete Hoekstra’s ad aired in Michigan during the Super Bowl in 2012.¹⁷⁹ From an advertising standpoint, the Super Bowl is a prime time to advertise given the fact that millions of fans will be watching and that part of the entertainment is actually watching the advertisements. However, there could also be another reason. Although baseball is often considered to be America’s “national pastime,” football is surely a competitor as a symbol of all that is American. Presenting

¹⁷⁹ Peter Hays Gries, “‘Red China’ and the ‘Yellow Peril’: How Ideology Divides Americans over China,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 14 (2014):393.

this advertisement during such a national event could also present anti-China sentiment as a national association.



Figure 10: Advertisement for Pete Hoekstra in 2012¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ This is a picture take from Hawkeytown, "Racist Pete Hoekstra SuperBowl Ad," *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f69VmlgmhOk> (accessed March 15, 2015)

Conclusion

The idea of the Yellow Peril is rooted in Western discourse. American discourse and political rhetoric still use imagery and depictions of East Asians as the Yellow Peril in times of conflict and difficulties.

In the beginning of interactions between the United States and Japan and China, Americans initially viewed East Asians favorably. However, as the number of immigrants increased and Americans began to fear economic competition, the views of Asian immigrants became more negative. These fears presented stereotyped-versions of East Asian immigrants, often associating them with the potential to morally corrupt American culture and also the Euro-American race. Chinese Americans were the first to experience the negativity since Chinese were the first migrants from East Asia to come to the United States. Although Japanese were initially viewed favorably as well when they came to America, eventually Japanese immigrants were faced with the same Yellow Peril stereotypes.

In the early 1900's views of both Chinese and Japanese took on a similar racial quality, presenting both Chinese and Japanese as part of the same overall threat. However, attitudes towards Chinese immigrants began to improve once the number of Chinese immigrants shrank. As Japan gained power and Japanese-Americans sought to move up the socioeconomic ladder, there was a growing backlash against this and an insistence that Japan was moving away from its "natural state."

Race heavily factored into America's judgment of Japan during WWII. Although Japan and Germany were on the same side during WWII, Japan was viewed in a highly racialized way. Japan, was presented as a beast, whereas German soldiers were still rational human beings. Japanese and Japanese Americans assumed the same negative image in American discourse and

rhetoric. However, views of Chinese and Chinese-Americans changed. Due to China's new status as an American ally combined with Orientalist confirming images of Madame Chiang, China and Chinese Americans became less of a Yellow Peril and more of an Oriental Protégé.

Economic conflict with Japan from the 1970s to the 1990s also led to the portrayal of Japan as the Yellow Peril once again. In the early years of the conflict, Japan was viewed from an Orientalist perspective: Japan was seen as incapable of handling itself in international relations and the United States was the only force who could still stand as the bearer of democracy and stability within the area. During the latter half of the conflict, as Japan's economic surplus and power grew, Japan became portrayed as more of a threat. This threat caused notions of the Yellow Peril to creep back into American discourse.

China, from the 1990s to the present has been viewed as a "Communist Other," conjuring forth Orientalist interpretations of China, as well as Yellow Peril images. During the Tiananmen massacre, images of China brought forth notions of the backwardness of China. Other events, such as the proposed sales of the Port of Long Beach and Unocal to Chinese companies brought forth charges that Chinese investors, working on behalf of China's communist government, threatened American security, economic well-being, and heritage, and. Beginning in the 1990s and continuing to the present, American politicians began to draw upon American concerns and perceptions of China, using Yellow Peril imagery in order to sell their platforms.

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