

CHAPTER VII

JAPAN AND CHINA BEFORE 1914

Before going into the detail of Japan's policy towards China, it is necessary to put the reader on his guard against the habit of thinking of the "Yellow Races," as though China and Japan formed some kind of unity. There are, of course, reasons which, at first sight, would lead one to suppose that China and Japan could be taken in one group in comparison with the races of Europe and of Africa. To begin with, the Chinese and Japanese are both yellow, which points to ethnic affinities; but the political and cultural importance of ethnic affinities is very small. The Japanese assert that the hairy Ainus, who are low in the scale of barbarians, are a white race akin to ourselves. I never saw a hairy Ainu, and I suspect the Japanese of malice in urging us to admit the Ainus as poor relations; but even if they really are of Aryan descent, that does not prove that they have anything of the slightest importance in common with us as compared to what the Japanese and Chinese have in common with us. Similarity of culture is infinitely more important than a common racial origin.

It is true that Japanese culture, until the Restoration, was derived from China. To this day, Japanese script is practically the same as Chinese, and Buddhism, which is still the religion of the people, is of the sort derived originally from China. Loyalty and filial piety, which

are the foundations of Japanese ethics, are Confucian virtues, imported along with the rest of ancient Chinese culture. But even before the irruption of European influences, China and Japan had had such different histories and national temperaments that doctrines originally similar had developed in opposite directions. China has been, since the time of the First Emperor (c. 200 B.C.), a vast unified bureaucratic land empire, having much contact with foreign nations--Annamese, Burmese, Mongols, Tibetans and even Indians. Japan, on the other hand, was an island kingdom, having practically no foreign contact except with Korea and occasionally with China, divided into clans which were constantly at war with each other, developing the virtues and vices of feudal chivalry, but totally unconcerned with economic or administrative problems on a large scale. It was not difficult to adapt the doctrines of Confucius to such a country, because in the time of Confucius China was still feudal and still divided into a number of petty kingdoms, in one of which the sage himself was a courtier, like Goethe at Weimar. But naturally his doctrines underwent a different development from that which befel them in their own country.

In old Japan, for instance, loyalty to the clan chieftain is the virtue one finds most praised; it is this same virtue, with its scope enlarged, which has now become patriotism. Loyalty is a virtue naturally praised where conflicts between roughly equal forces are frequent, as they were in feudal Japan, and are in the modern international world. In China, on the contrary, power seemed so secure, the Empire was so vast and immemorial, that the need for loyalty was not felt. Security bred a

different set of virtues, such as courtesy, considerateness, and compromise. Now that security is gone, and the Chinese find themselves plunged into a world of warring bandits, they have difficulty in developing the patriotism, ruthlessness, and unscrupulousness which the situation demands. The Japanese have no such difficulty, having been schooled for just such requirements by their centuries of feudal anarchy. Accordingly we find that Western influence has only accentuated the previous differences between China and Japan: modern Chinese like our thought but dislike our mechanism, while modern Japanese like our mechanism but dislike our thought.

From some points of view, Asia, including Russia, may be regarded as a unity; but from this unity Japan must be excluded. Russia, China, and India contain vast plains given over to peasant agriculture; they are easily swayed by military empires such as that of Jenghis Khan; with modern railways, they could be dominated from a centre more securely than in former times. They could be self-subsistent economically, and invulnerable to outside attack, independent of commerce, and so strong as to be indifferent to progress. All this may come about some day, if Russia happens to develop a great conqueror supported by German organizing ability. But Japan stands outside this order of possibilities. Japan, like Great Britain, must depend upon commerce for power and prosperity. As yet, Japan has not developed the Liberal mentality appropriate to a commercial nation, and is still bent upon Asiatic conquest and military prowess. This policy brings with it conflicts with China and Russia, which the present weakness of those

Powers has enabled Japan, hitherto, to conduct successfully. But both are likely to recover their strength sooner or later, and then the essential weakness of present Japanese policy will become apparent.

It results naturally from the situation that the Japanese have two somewhat incompatible ambitions. On the one hand, they wish to pose as the champions of Asia against the oppression of the white man; on the other hand, they wish to be admitted to equality by the white Powers, and to join in the feast obtained by exploiting the nations that are inefficient in homicide. The former policy should make them friendly to China and India and hostile to the white races; the latter policy has inspired the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and its fruits in the annexation of Korea and the virtual annexation of Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. As a member of the League of Nations, of the Big Five at Versailles, and of the Big Three at Washington, Japan appears as one of the ordinary Great Powers; but at other moments Japan aims at establishing a hegemony in Asia by standing for the emancipation from white tyranny of those who happen to be yellow or brown, but not black. Count Okuma, speaking in the Kobe Chamber of Commerce, said: "There are three hundred million natives in India looking to us to rescue them from the thralldom of Great Britain." [56] While in the Far East, I inquired of innumerable Englishmen what advantage our Government could suppose that we derived from the Japanese Alliance. The only answer that seemed to me to supply an intelligible motive was that the Alliance somewhat mitigates the intensity of Japanese anti-British propaganda in India. However that may be, there can be no doubt that the Japanese would like to pose before

the Indians as their champions against white tyranny. Mr. Pooley[57] quotes Dr. Ichimura of the Imperial University of Kyoto as giving the following list of white men's sins:--

(1) White men consider that they alone are human beings, and that all coloured races belong to a lower order of civilization.

(2) They are extremely selfish, insisting on their own interests, but ignoring the interests of all whom they regard as inferiors.

(3) They are full of racial pride and conceit. If any concession is made to them they demand and take more.

(4) They are extreme in everything, exceeding the coloured races in greatness and wickedness.

(5) They worship money, and believing that money is the basis of everything, will adopt any measures to gain it.

This enumeration of our vices appears to me wholly just. One might have supposed that a nation which saw us in this light would endeavour to be unlike us. That, however, is not the moral which the Japanese draw. They argue, on the contrary, that it is necessary to imitate us as closely as possible. We shall find that, in the long catalogue of crimes committed by Europeans towards China, there is hardly one which has not been equalled by the Japanese. It never occurs to a Japanese, even in his

wildest dreams, to think of a Chinaman as an equal. And although he wants the white man to regard himself as an equal, he himself regards Japan as immeasurably superior to any white country. His real desire is to be above the whites, not merely equal with them. Count Okuma put the matter very simply in an address given in 1913:--

The white races regard the world as their property and all other races are greatly their inferiors. They presume to think that the rôle of the whites in the universe is to govern the world as they please. The Japanese were a people who suffered by this policy, and wrongfully, for the Japanese were not inferior to the white races, but fully their equals. The whites were defying destiny, and woe to them.[58]

It would be easy to quote statements by eminent men to the effect that Japan is the greatest of all nations. But the same could be said of the eminent men of all other nations down to Ecuador. It is the acts of the Japanese rather than their rhetoric that must concern us.

The Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5 concerned Korea, with whose internal affairs China and Japan had mutually agreed not to interfere without first consulting each other. The Japanese claimed that China had infringed this agreement. Neither side was in the right; it was a war caused by a conflict of rival imperialisms. The Chinese were easily and decisively defeated, and from that day to this have not ventured to oppose any foreign Power by force of arms, except unofficially in the

Boxer rebellion. The Japanese were, however, prevented from reaping the fruits of their victory by the intervention of Russia, Germany and France, England holding aloof. The Russians coveted Korea for themselves, the French came in as their allies, and the Germans presumably joined them because of William II's dread of the Yellow Peril. However that may be, this intervention made the Russo-Japanese war inevitable. It would not have mattered much to Japan if the Chinese had established themselves in Korea, but the Russians would have constituted a serious menace. The Russians did not befriend China for nothing; they acquired a lease of Port Arthur and Dalny (now called Dairen), with railway and mining rights in Manchuria. They built the Chinese Eastern Railway, running right through Manchuria, connecting Port Arthur and Peking with the Siberian Railway and Europe. Having accomplished all this, they set to work to penetrate Korea. The Russo-Japanese war would presumably not have taken place but for the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, concluded in 1902. In British policy, this Alliance has always had a somewhat minor place, while it has been the corner-stone of Japanese foreign policy, except during the Great War, when the Japanese thought that Germany would win. The Alliance provided that, in the event of either Power being attacked by two Powers at once, the other should come to its assistance. It was, of course, originally inspired by fear of Russia, and was framed with a view to preventing the Russian Government, in the event of war with Japan or England, from calling upon the help of France. In 1902 we were hostile to France and Russia, and Japan remained hostile to Russia until after the Treaty of Portsmouth had been supplemented by the Convention of 1907. The Alliance

served its purpose admirably for both parties during the Russo-Japanese war. It kept France from joining Russia, and thereby enabled Japan to acquire command of the sea. It enabled Japan to weaken Russia, thus curbing Russian ambitions, and making it possible for us to conclude an Entente with Russia in 1907. Without this Entente, the Entente concluded with France in 1904 would have been useless, and the alliance which defeated Germany could not have been created.

Without the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Japan could not have fought Russia alone, but would have had to fight France also. This was beyond her strength at that time. Thus the decisive step in Japan's rise to greatness was due to our support.

The war ended with a qualified victory for Japan. Russia renounced all interference in Korea, surrendered Port Arthur and Dalny (since called Dairen) to the Japanese, and also the railway as far north as Changchun. This part of the railway, with a few branch lines, has since then been called the South Manchurian Railway. From Dairen to Changchun is 437 miles; Changchun is 150 miles south of Harbin. The Japanese use Dairen as the commercial port for Manchuria, reserving Port Arthur for purely naval purposes. In regard to Korea, Japan has conformed strictly to Western models. During the Russo-Japanese war, the Japanese made a treaty guaranteeing the independence and integrity of Korea; in 1910 they annexed Korea; since then they have suppressed Korean nationalists with every imaginable severity. All this establishes their claim to be fully the equals of the white men.

The Japanese not merely hold the South Manchurian Railway, but have a monopoly of railway construction in South Manchuria. As this was practically the beginning of Japan's control of large regions in China by means of railways monopolies, it will be worth while to quote Mr. Pooley's account of the Fa-ku-Men Railway incident,[59] which shows how the South Manchurian monopoly was acquired:--

"In November 1907 the Chinese Government signed a contract with Messrs Pauling and Co. for an extension of the Imperial Chinese railways northwards from Hsin-min-Tung to Fa-ku-Men, the necessary capital for the work being found by the British and Chinese Corporation. Japan protested against the contract, firstly, on an alleged secret protocol annexed to the treaty of Peking, which was alleged to have said that 'the Chinese Government shall not construct any main line in the neighbourhood of or parallel to the South Manchurian Railway, nor any branch line which should be prejudicial to the interests of that railway'; and, secondly, on the Convention of 1902, between China and Russia, that no railway should be built from Hsin-min-Tung without Russian consent. As by the Treaty of Portsmouth, Japan succeeded to the Russian rights, the projected line could not be built without her consent. Her diplomatic communications were exceedingly offensive in tone, and concluded with a notification that, if she was wrong, it was obviously only Russia who could rightfully take her to task!

"The Chinese Government based its action in granting the contract on the

clause of the 1898 contract for the construction of the Chung-hon-so to Hsin-min-Tung line, under which China specifically reserved the right to build the Fa-ku-Men line with the aid of the same contractors. Further, although by the Russo-British Note of 1898 British subjects were specifically excluded from participation in railway construction north of the Great Wall, by the Additional Note attached to the Russo-British Note the engagements between the Chinese Government and the British and Chinese Corporation were specifically reserved from the purview of the agreement.

"Even if Japan, as the heir of Russia's assets and liabilities in Manchuria, had been justified in her protest by the Convention of 1902 and by the Russo-British Note of 1899, she had not fulfilled her part of the bargain, namely, the Russian undertaking in the Note to abstain from seeking concession, rights and privileges in the valley of the Yangtze. Her reliance on the secret treaty carried weight with Great Britain, but with no one else, as may be gauged from the records of the State Department at Washington. A later claim advanced by Japan that her action was justified by Article VI of the Treaty of Portsmouth, which assigned to Japan all Russian rights in the Chinese Eastern Railway (South Manchurian Railway) 'with all rights and properties appertaining thereto,' was effectively answered by China's citation of Articles III and IV of the same Treaty. Under the first of these articles it is declared that 'Russia has no territorial advantages or preferential or exclusive concessions in Manchuria in impairment of Chinese sovereignty or inconsistent with the principle of equal opportunity'; whilst the

second is a reciprocal engagement by Russia and Japan 'not to obstruct any general measures common to all countries which China may take for the development of the commerce and industry of Manchuria.'

"It would be interesting to know whether a refusal to allow China to build a railway on her own territory is or is not an impairment of Chinese sovereignty and whether such a railway as that proposed was not a measure for the 'development of the commerce and industry of Manchuria.'

"It is doubtful if even the Russo-Japanese war created as much feeling in China as did the Fa-ku-men incident. Japan's action was of such flagrant dishonesty and such a cynical repudiation of her promises and pledges that her credit received a blow from which it has never since recovered. The abject failure of the British Government to support its subjects' treaty rights was almost as much an eye-opener to the world as the protest from Tokio....

"The methods which had proved so successful in stopping the Fa-ku-men railway were equally successful in forcing the abandonment of other projected railways. Among these were the Chin-chou-Aigun line and the important Antung-Mukden line.[60] The same alleged secret protocol was used equally brutally and successfully for the acquisition of the Newchwang line, and participation in 1909, and eventual acquisition in 1914, of the Chan-Chun-Kirin lines. Subsequently by an agreement with Russia the sixth article of the Russo-Chinese Agreement of 1896 was

construed to mean 'the absolute and exclusive rights of administration within the railway zone.'"

Japan's spheres of influence have been subsequently extended to cover the whole of Manchuria and the whole of Shantung--though the latter has been nominally renounced at Washington. By such methods as the above, or by loans to impecunious Chinese authorities, the Japanese have acquired vast railway monopolies wherever their influence has penetrated, and have used the railways as a means of acquiring all real power in the provinces through which they run.

After the Russo-Japanese war, Russia and Japan became firm friends, and agreed to bring pressure on China jointly in any matter affecting Manchuria. Their friendship lasted until the Bolshevik revolution. Russia had entered into extensive obligations to support Japan's claims at the Peace Conference, which of course the Bolsheviks repudiated. Hence the implacable hostility of Japan to Soviet Russia, leading to the support of innumerable White filibusters in the territory of the Far Eastern Republic, and to friendship with France in all international questions. As soon as there began to be in China a revolutionary party aiming at the overthrow of the Manchus, the Japanese supported it. They have continuously supported either or both sides in Chinese dissensions, as they judged most useful for prolonging civil war and weakening China politically. Before the revolution of 1911, Sun Yat Sen was several times in Japan, and there is evidence that as early as 1900 he was obtaining financial support from some Japanese.[61] When the revolution

actually broke out, Japan endeavoured to support the Manchus, but was prevented from doing so effectively by the other Legations. It seems that the policy of Japan at that time, as later, was to prevent the union of North and South, and to confine the revolution to the South. Moreover, reverence for monarchy made Japan unwilling to see the Emperor of China dispossessed and his whole country turned into a Republic, though it would have been agreeable to see him weakened by the loss of some southern provinces. Mr. Pooley gives a good account of the actions of Japan during the Chinese Revolution, of which the following quotation gives the gist[62]:--

It [the Genro] commenced with a statement from Prince Katsura on December 18th [1911], that the time for intervention had arrived, with the usual rider "for the sake of the peace of the Far East." This was followed by a private instruction to M. Ijuin, Japanese Minister in Peking, whereunder the latter on December 23rd categorically informed Yuan-shi-kai that under no circumstances would Japan recognize a republican form of government in China.... In connection with the peace conference held at Shanghai, Mr. Matsui (now Japanese Ambassador to France), a trusted Councillor of the Foreign Office, was dispatched to Peking to back M. Ijuin in the negotiations to uphold the dynasty. Simultaneously, Mr. Denison, Legal Adviser to the Japanese Foreign Office, was sent to Shanghai to negotiate with the rebel leaders. Mr. Matsui's mission was to bargain for Japanese support of the Manchus against the rebels, Manchuria

against the throne; Mr. Denison's mission was to bargain for Japanese support of the rebels against the throne, recognition by Peking of the Southern Republic against virtually a Japanese protectorate of that Republic and exclusive railway and mining concessions within its borders. The rebels absolutely refused Mr. Denison's offer, and sent the proposed terms to the Russian Minister at Peking, through whom they eventually saw the light of day. Needless to say the Japanese authorities strenuously denied their authenticity.

The British Legation, however, supported Yuan Shi-k'ai, against both the Manchus and Sun Yat Sen; and it was the British policy which won the day. Yuan Shi-k'ai became President, and remained so until 1915. He was strongly anti-Japanese, and had, on that ground, been opposed as strongly as Japan dared. His success was therefore a blow to the influence of Japan in China. If the Western Powers had remained free to make themselves felt in the Far East, the course of events would doubtless have been much less favourable to the Japanese; but the war came, and the Japanese saw their chance. How they used it must be told in a separate chapter.