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Le Péril Jaune – Á. Vámbéry and his Views on China and Japan

I.

In 1904 Vámbéry's small monograph was published in Budapest in German (*Die gelbe Gefahr. Eine Kulturstudie*) and French (*Le Péril jaune. Étude sociale*).¹ While the German edition was barely distributed (even in the German-speaking countries), the French version found a certain response – probably also because the higher print run. A cultural study that, according to its title, seemed to evoke the flood of works thematizing the supposed threat from the Far East that had been published for a number of years at the time. An impression that makes us look at not only this work, but also its embedment in the corresponding contemporary literature on the subject, as well as Vámbéry's contributions to East Asia.²

II.

In the relevant literature, the term “yellow peril” is either viewed quite simply as a pejorative expression from the time of colonialism or related to certain historical events from around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (the “Boxer Rebellion” [1899–1901] or the Russo-Japanese War [1904–1905]).³ However, the picture is not that simple. The historical events only represent the “end points” in a supposedly ancient threat situation that is somehow localized “in the east.” Here the primal fears of Europe of invasions from the steppes of Eurasia are called up and at the turn of the nineteenth century current political events are put in parallel or placed in this actually non-existing “tradition” with the so-called “Hunnensturm,” the invasions of the Avars and the Hungarians, the invasion by the Mongols or the advance of the Ottomans up to the sieges of Vienna (1529 and 1683).⁴ The French term *Le Péril*

¹ Á. VÁMBÉRY, *Le Péril jaune* (Budapest: Gustave Ranschburg, 1904).

² On this, see below.

³ An extensive study of the term as well as the concept of the “yellow peril” can be found in H. GOLLWITZER, *Die “Gelbe Gefahr”* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1962); cf. also R. A. THOMPSON, *The Yellow Peril* (MA thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1957) and T. D. KENDALL, *Ways of Seeing China* (Fremantle City: Fremantle Art Centre Press, 2005).

⁴ In German-speaking literature we can already find these parallels in the titles of works on the “Hunnensturm” (e.g. C. LINDBERG, *Europa erzittert vor dem Hunnensturm*, [Wien: Wiener Verlag, 1976]), “Mongolensturm” (e.g. E. J. SCHWAMMEL, *Der Anteil des österreichischen Herzogs Friedrich* [Wien: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1857]) and “Tatarensturm” (e.g. M. WORGITZKI *Tatarensturm* [Berlin: Junge Generation Verlag, 1935]).

Jaune itself is also unrelated to the mentioned events, as it was apparently coined by Jacques (Iakov Ivanovich) Novikov (1849–1912) as early as 1897.⁵

The influence of colonialism on the emergence of the concept on which this term is based is certainly there – albeit not in the form that is sometimes assumed. The concept of the “yellow peril” (or even just the term) was not conceived in European colonialism and imperialism, it is, rather, linked to an image of China and Japan that changed at the beginning of the 19th century. Until then, romantic ideas from the Enlightenment had prevailed with regard to the largely unknown empire formations in the Far East; China in particular was viewed as an empire ruled by wise men and scholars, in which reason prevails and religious tolerance exists.⁶ This image of the distant empire, from which luxury goods (from porcelain, lacquer art to otter furs) were obtained⁷ for more than two centuries and which was playfully imitated in the form of chinoiseries (which have found their fashionable expression in the form of furniture, wallpaper, porcelain, architecture and garden design),⁸ now changed fundamentally. Already Napoléon I warned about China: “It is a sleeping giant. Let her sleep, for when she wakes she will move the world” – and the change in perception became apparent. East Asia came into the focus of European powers who intended to exploit the resources of the gigantic empire and wanted to open new markets. A request that finally culminated in the First Opium War (1839–1842).⁹ Japan, on the other hand, has been seen as a competitor in these efforts since the Meiji Restoration (from 1868) and the subsequent modernization measures. Since the “Empire of the Rising Sun” finally also developed colonialist and imperialist ambitions, the East Asian powers soon became suitable as enemy images, which, so to speak, formed the foil for the concept of the “yellow peril.”

Additionally, before the “Boxer Rebellion” (1899–1901) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) the term and the concept found their way into the entertainment literature. At last with the serial novel *The Empress of the Earth* by Matthew Phipps Shiel (July 20, 1865 – February 17, 1947)¹⁰ from 1897 – the novel was published

⁵ J. NOVICOW. “Le péril jaune,” in: *Revue Internationale de Sociologie* V. Paris 1897, 351–359.

⁶ This was an image based on the somehow romantic descriptions of J. NIEUHOF / G. HORN. *Legatio Batavica Ad Magnum Tartariae chamum Sungteium* (Amstelodanum: Jacobus Meursius, 1668) and J. B. DU HALDE. *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'empire de la Chine* (La Haye: P. G. Le Mercier, 1736). On European-Chinese relations generally, see A. REICHWEIN. *China und Europa* (Berlin: Oesterheld & Co. Verlag, 1923), on the influence on art and architecture, see R. GRAUL. *Ostasiatische Kunst und ihr Einfluß auf Europa* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1906) and F. LASKE. *Der ostasiatische Einfluß auf die Baukunst des Abendlandes* (Berlin: Wilhelm Ernst & Sohn, 1909).

⁷ M. MENNE. *Diskurs und Dekor* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2018), 37 ff.

⁸ MENNE (2018), with numerous references.

⁹ On the Opium war (lasting from September 4, 1839 to August 29, 1842) cf. the comprehensive descriptions of J. LOVELL. *The Opium War* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2011) and S. R. PLATT. *Imperial Twilight* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018).

¹⁰ Cf. on M. P. Shiel the bio-bibliographical works of H. BILLINGS. *M. P. Shiel: A Biography of His Early Years* (Austin: Roger Beacham, 2005) and *M. P. Shiel: The Middle Years 1897–1923* (Austin: Roger Beacham, 2010).

the following year under the title *The Yellow Danger* (a little later the title (probably based on Novikov's article, changed to *The Yellow Peril*, whereby the term was then coined in its final form in English)¹¹ – both, the term and the concept, had reached a wider audience. The starting point for Shiel's adoption of the concept was the murder of some Christian missionaries in Jiāozhōu (膠州) in 1897 – an event that led to the stationing of a “protection force.”¹²

With the “Boxer Rebellion” (from 1899) the term became popular in Europe and was used as a term in not a few languages. In Germany the term was popularized by Stefan v. Kotze's book *Die gelbe Gefahr* from 1900¹³ and by Hermann v. Samson-Himmelstjerna's *Die gelbe Gefahr als Moralproblem*, which came out a little later (1902).¹⁴ The situation was once again heated up with the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. It was certainly no coincidence that v. Kotze's book reached its second edition during this time.¹⁵ After that, the term and concept remained “effective” under changing conditions (e.g. anti-Japanese propaganda in World War II,¹⁶ the Communists' takeover in China,¹⁷ China's economic rise since the 1990s,¹⁸ etc.) to the present day, although the implications in entertainment (for example in novels by Sax Rohmer,¹⁹ Edgar Wallace,²⁰ Hans Dominik²¹ or in film

¹¹ On this cf. R. A. THOMPSON. *The Yellow Peril* (University of Wisconsin 1957) and T. D. KENDALL. *Ways of Seeing China* (Fremantle City: Fremantle Art Centre Press, 2005).

¹² This was the so-called “Juye-Vorfall” (“Juye Incident”; Chinese 曹州教案 or 巨野教案). An incident during which the two Catholic missionaries Richard Henle and Franz Xaver Nies were killed in the night from November 1 to 2, 1897 in Jùyě Xiàn / Shāndōng. On the “Juye-Vorfall” cf. R. G. TIEDEMANN. “Not Every Martyr is a Saint! The Juye Missionary Case of 1897 Reconsidered,” in: *A Lifelong Dedication to the China Mission* (Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Institute, 2007).

¹³ S. V. KOTZE. *Die gelbe Gefahr* (Berlin: Verlag Continent, 1900).

¹⁴ H. V. SAMSON-HIMMELSTJERNA. *Die gelbe Gefahr als Moralproblem* (Berlin: Deutscher Kolonial-Verlag, 1902); further works, such as the books of M. MAIER-HUGENDUBEL. *Die “gelbe Gefahr” und ihre Abwehr* (Basel: Verlag der Missionsbuchhandlung, 1905), C. SPIELMANN. *Arier und Mongolen* (Halle a. S.: H. Gesenius, 1905), W. V. WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF. *Besteht eine gelbe Gefahr?* (Postdam: Stein 1905), F. V. D. GOLTZ. *Die gelbe Gefahr im Lichte der Geschichte* (Leipzig: Friedrich Engelmann, 1907), V. V. LIGNITZ. *Deutschlands Interessen in Ostasien und die gelbe Gefahr* (Berlin: Voss, 1907) and A. V. PEEZ. *Die gelbe Gefahr in der Geschichte Europas* (Wien: Verlag “Lumen”, 1908) etc. followed.

¹⁵ We can find an increasing number of works during and after the Russo-Japanese War especially in Germany (see above).

¹⁶ On this extensively J. W. DOWER. *War Without Mercy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

¹⁷ P. VAN BLÄTTJEN. *Die gelbe Gefahr hat rote Hände* (Graz: Leopold Stocker, 1963); *Der Spiegel*, Mao Tse-Tung. Die Gelbe Gefahr, no. 27, d. 2.7.1957.

¹⁸ G. DORSEY / S. LEEB. *Die gelbe Gefahr* (München: FinanzBuch Verlag, 2012); *Der Spiegel*, Der Siegeszug des Drachen. Wie überlegen ist uns China wirklich?, no. 4, d. 22.1.2021.

¹⁹ Cf. on Sax Rohmer (= Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward; 15.2.1883–1.6.1959) P. BAKER / A. CLAYTON. *Lord of Strange Deaths* (London: Strange Attractor, 2015); on the character of his Fu Manchu in the context of the *Yellow Peril* cf. R. MAYER. *Serial Fu Manchu* (Philadelphia, PA.: Temple University Press, 2014).

²⁰ E. WALLACE. *The Yellow Snake*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926; on this later a German movie (“Der Fluch der gelben Schlange”, 1963) was based.

²¹ In several of the science-fiction novels of Hans Dominik the concept of the “yellow peril” plays a role (e.g. *Die Spur des Dschingis-Khan: Ein Roman a.d. 21. Jh.* Berlin 1923, *Das stählerne Geheimnis*. Berlin 1934, etc.).

“The Mask of Fu Manchu” (1932),²² “The Terror of the Tongs” (1961)²³ etc.²⁴) today have largely disappeared for various reasons.²⁵ The situation after the publication of Vámbéry’s *Le Péril Jaune* does not need further attention here.

III.

It can be stated that Vámbéry’s contributions concerning East Asia (including the regions belonging to the empire of the Qīng dynasty, such as East Turkestan or Tibet²⁶) constitute only a negligible fraction of his vast *œuvre*. If we take a closer look at these works, they can be roughly divided into two thematic categories:

- 1.) more or less Turkological contributions with linguistic and ethnographic topics and
- 2.) articles that deal with the expanded geopolitical area (or individual regions) from this very point of view: here geopolitical problems of the regions of Central Asia in question in the area of tension of the “Great Game” resp. East Asia as a kind of “side-war theater” of this vast, competing striving for supremacy between the Russian Empire and the British Empire. Sinological or Japonological questions, however, played no role for Vámbéry.²⁷

²² The movie “The Mask of Fu Manchu,” 1932, directed by Charles Brabin was based on one of the novel written by S. Rohmer and was the fourth film of the Fu Manchu-series.

²³ “The Terror of the Tongs,” 1961, was a Hammer film production directed by Anthony Bushell.

²⁴ We can find single characters in films as well as whole serials depicting directly or indirectly the “yellow peril” till the 1970s.

²⁵ This is especially due to the consequences of discussions on political correctness, the use of stereotypical depictions in films, and cultural appropriation.

²⁶ Á. VÁMBÉRY. “The Chinese in Central Asia,” in: *Times* no. 26035 d. 31.1.1868, 7 e, “England, Russia, and Chinese Tartary,” in: *Times* no. 26102 d. 18.4.1868, 5 e, “Keleti Turkesztán vagy a khinai tatárság,” in: *BpSz* 14. 1869, 3–23, “On the Uigurs,” in: *Report of the Thirty-Eight Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science held at Norwich in August 1868: Notices and Abstracts of Miscellaneous Communications to the Section*. London: John Murray, 1869, 141, “Die Chinesen in Ost-Turkestan,” in: *Allgemeine Zeitung* no. 78, d. 19.3.1877, 1081 a–1082 a, “De chineezen in Oost-Turkestan,” in: *Sumatra-Courant. Nieuws-, Handels- en Advertentieblad* no. 54. 1877, d. 7.7.1877 [without pagination] and no. 55, d. 11.7.1877 [without pagination], “Central Asian Questions: Essays on Afghanistan, China, and Central Asia. By Demetrius C. Boulger,” in: *Academy* 28 (689), d. 18.7.1885, 35 c–36 b, “Die Entfaltung der Dinge in China,” in: *Die Wage. Eine Wiener Wochenschrift* year 1, no. 35, d. 27.8.1898, 574 b–575 b, “Ethnographisches aus Ostturkestan,” in: *Österreichische Monatschrift für den Orient* 25 (2). 1899, 13–14, “Der Kampf um Tibet,” in: *Die Zeit* (Wien) year 2, no. 427 (morning issue), d. 6.12.1903, 1 c–2 b etc.; in addition see [anonymous]: Russia and Thibet. Professor Vambéry interviewed. In: *The Globe* d. 16.9.1902, 5 b [also ibd. d. 17.9.1902, 2 b]; [anonymous]: Russia and Tibet. Professor Vambéry and the rumoured treaty. In: *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph* d. 17.9.1902, 6 f.

²⁷ Although he also dealt with the geopolitical problems of China and Japan (Á. VÁMBÉRY. “The Chinese in Central Asia,” in: *Times* no. 26035 d. 31.1.1868, 7 e, “England, Russia, and Chinese Tartary,” in: *Times* no. 26102 d. 18.4.1868, 5 e, “Die Chinesen in Ost-Turkestan,” in: *Allgemeine Zeitung* no. 78, d. 19.3.1877, 1081 a–1082 a, “De chineezen in Oost-Turkestan,” in: *Sumatra-Courant. Nieuws-, Handels- en*

The first category includes articles that deal more or less with “Chinese Tartary”, i.e. East Turkestan, Inner and Outer Mongolia, and neighboring regions of the Qing Empire²⁸ or with certain aspects of ethnography and language.²⁹ Vámbéry was not able to speak Chinese, Mongolian, Manžu or even Tibetan, so his works were always concerned with Turkological or Islamic topics. The contributions were sometimes pioneering works, as he was one of the first to communicate something about New Uyghur,³⁰ published one of the most extensive Chagatay texts, the *Qutadju Bilig* (the manuscript of which, as is well known, was written in Uyghur script),³¹ and also one of the first in the west who dealt with the Islam in the “Middle Kingdom” – or rather in its border regions.³²

In later years Vámbéry also initiated Old Turkic research, on written source materials have been found in the Chinese Empire or its catchment areas. It was initially the “Runic” Turkic inscriptions from the Yenissei and Orkhon areas, unraveled by

Advertentieblad no. 54. 1877, d. 7.7.1877 [without pagination] and no. 55, d. 11.7.1877 [without pagination], “Central Asian Questions: Essays on Afghanistan, China, and Central Asia. By Demetrius C. Boulger,” in: *Academy* 28 (689), d. 18.7.1885, 35 c–36 b, “Die Entfaltung der Dinge in China,” in: *Die Wage. Eine Wiener Wochenschrift* year 1, no. 35, d. 27.8.1898, 574 b–575 b, “Zur Theilung Chinas,” in: *Die Wage. Eine Wiener Wochenschrift* year 1, no. 2, d. 8.1.1898, 1 a–2 a) as well as the modernization of those countries (Vámbéry, “Khina és japán a modern műveltség terén,” in: *BpSx* 81 (218). 1895, 161–183 and 81 (219), 349–363, “A modern műveltség Japánban,” in: *Jöv* 2 (8). 1904, 10–19) or the influences of the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War on the world of Islam (Vámbéry, “Japan and the Mahometan world,” in: *NCent* 57 (338). April 1905, 573–576, “Japan’s triumph. Islam and the war,” in: *The Times of India* vol. 68, no. 83, d. 7.4.1905, 7 e–f.).

²⁸ Á. VÁMBÉRY. “The Chinese in Central Asia,” in: *Times* no. 26035 d. 31.1.1868, 7 e, “England, Russia, and Chinese Tartary,” in: *Times* no. 26102 d. 18.4.1868, 5 e, “Keleti Turkesztán vagy a khinai tatárság,” in: *BpSx* 14. 1869, 3–23, “Die Chinesen in Ost-Turkestan,” in: *Allgemeine Zeitung* no. 78, d. 19.3.1877, 1081 a–1082 and “De chineezen in Oost-Turkestan,” in: *Sumatra-Courant. Nieuws-, Handels- en Advertentieblad* no. 54. 1877, d. 7.7.1877 [without pagination] and no. 55, d. 11.7.1877 [without pagination].

²⁹ Á. VÁMBÉRY. “Ein chinesisches-tatarischer Originalbrief, übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen begleitet,” in: *ZDMG* 19. 1865, 297–302 and “Ethnographisches aus Ostturkestan,” in: *Österreichische Monatschrift für den Orient* 25 (2). 1899, 13–14.

³⁰ See especially Á. VÁMBÉRY. “Ein chinesisches-tatarischer Originalbrief, übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen begleitet,” in: *ZDMG* 19. 1865, 297–302, “Az ‘Ujgurok nyelvelékei’ című munkának bevezetéséből,” in: *NyK* 7. 1869, 222–241, “On the Uigurs,” in: *Report of the Thirty-Eight Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science held at Norwich in August 1868: Notices and Abstracts of Miscellaneous Communications to the Section*. London: John Murray, 1869, 141, “Az ujjur nyelvelékek,” in: *AkÉrt* 4 1870, 277–278 and *Uigurische Sprachmonumente und das Kudatku Bilik* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, Innsbruck: Wagner 1870).

³¹ Á. VÁMBÉRY. *Uigurische Sprachmonumente und das Kudatku Bilik* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, Innsbruck: Wagner 1870), an edition based on one of the first manuscripts in Uyghur script that had found its way into the West – the *Qutadju Bilig* had found its way to Vienna by Joseph v. Hammer-Purgstall, who bought the manuscript in the early 19th century in Istanbul. Some of the aspects which dealt with in the volume were also communicated in a number of articles written by Vámbéry (Á. VÁMBÉRY. “Az ‘Ujgurok nyelvelékei’ című munkának bevezetéséből,” in: *NyK* 7. 1869, 222–241 and “Az ujjur nyelvelékek,” in: *AkÉrt* 4 1870, 277–278).

³² Á. VÁMBÉRY. “Európa viszonya Khinához és az iszlám világhoz,” in: *BpSx* 105. 1901, 1–27 and “Unsre Beziehungen zu China und zur Islamwelt,” in: *DeRev* year 26. February 1901, 155–177.

V. Thomsen and F. W. Radloff, that caught his attention,³³ but later also the research trips and archaeological work of Sir Marc Aurél Stein³⁴ and finally the Old Uyghur manuscripts collected in the course of the Turfan expeditions.³⁵

The second aspect of his treatment of East Asia concerns “The Great Game,” the competitive striving of Great Britain and the Russian Empire in Central Asia – an ongoing conflict, sometimes in completely different forms, which began with the defeat of Napoléon I and was only formally resolved in 1907. As part of this striving for supremacy in Central Asia, after the successful advance of Russia into the so-called “Turkoman Steppes,” i.e., the regions of today’s Turkmenistān, as well as the conquest of the H̄ānates of H̄iva and Buḥārā,³⁶ and areas that belonged directly or indirectly to the Chinese Empire, and finally Japan as a new power competing with the Russian Empire came into focus. Vámbéry, who himself reported on various occasions about the supposed dangers that allegedly threatened in Tibet³⁷ – and was ultimately wrong – was actually not the only one who had such fears. As is well known, the Younghusband expedition (1903–1904),³⁸ which was carried out under the assumption of a Russian advance on the “roof of the world,” is today considered to be based on gross misjudgments, as it turned out to be a prime example of imperialist invasion and completely senseless war crimes (massacre of Guru and siege of the fortress Gyangzê).

Regardless of this, the Russian Empire actually already advanced into China and Vámbéry finally dealt with Manchuria³⁹ and the campaigns of Yaḥqūb Beg in

³³ Á. VÁMBÉRY. *Noten zu den alttürkischen Inschriften der Mongolei und Sibiriens* (Helsingfors: Druckerei der Finnischen Litteratur-Gesellschaft, 1898).

³⁴ Á. VÁMBÉRY. “Die archäologische Forschungsreise eines Ungars in Ost-Turkestan,” in: *Pester Lloyd* year 50, no. 189, d. 7.8.1903 [without pagination].

³⁵ Á. VÁMBÉRY. “Turfaner türkische Sprachmonumente: I. Glossen zum Chuastuanit d. h. dem türkischen Bussgebet der Manichäer. 2. Glossen zur Uigurica,” in: *KSz* 12. 1911–1912, 158–173.

³⁶ Cf. on these the numerous works of Vámbéry enlisted in the Vámbéry bio-bibliography of the author (M. KNÜPPEL. *Ármin(ius) Vámbéry (1832–1913) – Versuch einer Personalbibliographie* (Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz Verlag, 2020).

³⁷ [ANONYMOUS]: Russia and Thibet. Professor Vambery interviewed. In: *The Globe* d. 16.9.1902, 5 b [also ibd. d. 17.9.1902, 2 b]; [ANONYMOUS]: Russia and Tibet. Professor Vambery and the rumoured treaty. In: *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph* d. 17.9.1902, 6 f.; Á. VÁMBÉRY. “Der Kampf um Tibet,” in: *Die Zeit* (Wien) year 2, no. 427 (morning issue), d. 6.12.1903, 1 c–2 b.

³⁸ Cf. on the expedition C. ALLEN. *Duel in the Snows* (London: Murray, 2004) and P. FRENCH. *Younghusband* (London: Harper Collins, 2004), on Sir Francis Edward Younghusband also G. SEAVER. *Francis Younghusband* (London: Murray, 1952). Vámbéry himself wrote a review on Younghusband’s “The heart of a continent” (Á. VÁMBÉRY. “Im Herzen eines Kontinents,” in: *1. Beilage des „Pester Lloyd“ zur Nr. 136* (year 43), d. 3.6.1896 [without pagination]).

³⁹ Á. VÁMBÉRY. “Mántsuria,” in: *Hon* 7 (93). 1869, 1 and “Eine Reise in die Mandschurei,” in: *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung* no. 117, d. 17.4.1888, 1715 a–b. In his “Die gelbe Gefahr” he also mentions this problem: “Wir möchten auch gern diese kaiserlichen Mahnworte beherzigen, wenn dieselben nicht zufälligerweise aus einer Zeit stammen würden, [...] als die liebe Nachbarin Frau Russia, [...] den Plan einer Besitzergreifung von Mandschurien und der Halbinsel von Liao-Tung nicht eben darnach schon ausgeheckt hätte.” [“We would also like to heed these Imperial warnings, if they did not

East Turkestan. The latter wanted to break out the areas ruled by himself from the Chinese Empire and hoped for the support of either the Russian Empire or the British Empire.⁴⁰ On one occasion, Vámbéry already wrote about the future division of China,⁴¹ which in view of the activities of foreign colonial powers did not seem so absurd at that time – and of course the Russian-British contrast formed the background for him again. As for the new player, Japan, the corresponding geopolitical considerations were also of central importance for Vámbéry in this context and in fact, the Russo-Japanese War caught fire due to the competitive situation between the two powers in the northeast of the Qīng Empire (or more precisely: on the Russian advance in Manchuria).

IV.

Now we come to Vámbéry's *Le Péril Jaune*. One might assume based on the title, which reminds us of contemporary works in the same or similar vein, or the political moods of the years that followed the "Boxer Rebellion," that the author here intended to find the next opponents of the British Empire. However, this is not the case. In his study, Vámbéry first deals with the concept of the "yellow peril" and the considerations on which it is based.⁴² First and foremost, he presents the rise of Japan, which could serve as a model in a cultural struggle between the "yellow race" and the "white race" – quite apart from Japan's possible leadership role in this struggle.⁴³ He also discusses the view which is often raised in this context, that Buddhism unites the peoples of East Asia and could become a counterforce to Christianity.⁴⁴ The third point, often formulated in the context of the idea of a "yellow peril", is economics.⁴⁵ Here it is more often assumed that the up-and-coming Japan, in association with other East Asian nations, could achieve economic superiority and endanger the prosperity of Europe and America. These individual aspects of the alleged "yellow danger" are then all bit by bit described by Vámbéry as what they actually were – absurd reflections of fears.⁴⁶ In doing so, he first addresses the problems of the military and explains why the rise of Japan, which had been at war

.....
 coincidentally come from a time when [...] our dear neighbor, Mrs. Russia, [...] did not plan to take possession of Manchuria and the Liao-Tung peninsula would have already concocted it." (Á. VÁMBÉRY. *Die gelbe Gefabr* (Budapest: Friedrich Kilians Nachfolger, 1904), 4).

⁴⁰ On Yā'qūb Beg (1820[?]–1877), who ruled Kāshgharia as Amir or Atalıq Ghāzī from 1865–1877, cf. H. KIM. *Holy War in China* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2004).

⁴¹ Á. VÁMBÉRY. "Zur Theilung Chinas," in: *Die Wage. Eine Wiener Wochenschrift* year I, no. 2, d. 8.I.1898, 1 a–2 a.

⁴² Á. VÁMBÉRY. *Die gelbe Gefabr*, 4–10.

⁴³ Á. VÁMBÉRY. *Die gelbe Gefabr*, 10–12.

⁴⁴ Á. VÁMBÉRY. *Die gelbe Gefabr*, 12–16.

⁴⁵ Á. VÁMBÉRY. *Die gelbe Gefabr*, 16–18 and 21–23.

⁴⁶ In his booklet Vámbéry underlines the defensive character of Japanese foreign policy and claimed the Russo-Japanese war was nothing but an act of defense.

with Russia for a few weeks or months when the study was published, cannot be transferred to China. Reference is made here to the military, but above all also the cultural differences between the two East Asian empires. Vámbéry's assessments of the military capabilities of the "Middle Kingdom" and the not entirely simple, culturally-based relationship to the military and warfare in contemporary China that existed at that time are of particular importance.⁴⁷ Then the alleged danger to Christianity associated with the rise of Japan is discussed. Vámbéry emphasizes that in Japan especially religion is not an official matter, but rather a private affair.⁴⁸ Furthermore, according to Vámbéry, Buddhism is only one of several religions in the "Kingdom of the Rising Sun" and plays a completely different role than, for example, in China.⁴⁹ The author refutes the alleged economic threat to "the West" from economic statistical data and finally concludes that the rise of Japan for Europe and America is rather an opportunity and will lead to a change in Russia.⁵⁰ Overall, the outlook for the time after the war is presented in an extremely positive light and the existence of a "yellow peril" is – quite rightly – relegated to the realm of fables and legends.

Now, this work by Vámbéry was not created in a political vacuum or even simply inspired by the war between Japan and the Russian Empire. It was the Japanese ambassador to Great Britain Hayashi Tadasu (April 11, 1850–10 July 1913)

⁴⁷ Á. VÁMBÉRY. *Die gelbe Gefahr*, 11: "Besonders schwer kann in China vom Erwecken eines militärischen Geistes die Rede sein, denn der junge Chinese, dem aus dem Schu-King die Lehre beigebracht wird, dass der Fürst, der fremde Länder erobert, zu verachten sei und dass der General, der eine Schlacht gewonnen, den Galgen verdient, der wird im reiferen Alter sich schwerlich für Waffenthaten begeistern, [...]" – "In China it can be particularly difficult to speak of awakening a military spirit, because the young Chinese, who is taught the lesson from the Shu-King that the prince who conquers foreign lands is to be despised and that the general who fights a battle won deserves the gallows will hardly be enthusiastic about armed deeds in his mature age, [...]"

⁴⁸ Á. VÁMBÉRY. *Die gelbe Gefahr*, 13: "In der japanischen Konstitution bildet nämlich das Princip der vollständigen Trennung der Religion ein Grundelement. Der Glaube wird als eine Privatangelegenheit des Bürgers angesehen, in die der Staat sich nicht mischt und in den Schulen gehört die Religionslehre nicht zu den Unterrichtsgegenständen [...]. Ob nun jemand dem Buddhismus, Schintoismus oder Christenthume angehört, das ist der Regierung und Gesellschaft in Japan ganz gleichgiltig." – "In fact, in the Japanese constitution the principle of complete separation of religion is a basic element. Faith is seen as a private matter of the citizen, in which the state does not interfere and in schools the teaching of religion is not one of the subjects of instruction [...]. Whether someone belongs to Buddhism, Shintoism or Christianity, that is completely irrelevant to the government and society in Japan."

⁴⁹ Á. VÁMBÉRY. *Die gelbe Gefahr*.

⁵⁰ Á. VÁMBÉRY. *Die gelbe Gefahr*, 36: "Dieser Krieg wir einen Wendepunkt in der Geschichte Russlands bilden und hoffentlich ale eine Einleitung in eine neue Aera des Friedens für das übrige Europa gelten, denn der ewige Störenfried wird nun zur Besinnung kommen und in neue Bahnen einlenken müssen. Die vermeint – 'Gelbe Gefahr' – kann für Europa und Asien eine – 'Rosige Zukunft' – werden." – "This war will mark a turning point in the history of Russia and hopefully it will be an introduction to a new era of peace for the rest of Europe, because the eternal troublemaker will now come to his senses and have to steer into new paths. The supposed – 'yellow danger' – can become a – 'rosy future' – for Europe and Asia."

who approached Vámbéry and congratulated him on his contribution and assured him that there would be no “yellow peril” if the peoples of East Asia were merely civilized (which of course is the destination of Japan).⁵¹ The ambassador to Austria-Hungary, Makino Nobuaki (November 24, 1861 – January 25, 1949) suggested that Vámbéry should write a contribution to refute the concept of the “yellow peril” and 10,000 copies of the work in German and French in Europe should be distributed.⁵² Foreign minister Komura Jutarō (November 5, 1855 – November 26, 1911) ultimately provided ¥ 1,700 for the whole endeavour.⁵³ The approach to Vámbéry, on the other hand, took place within an actually well-planned program to achieve western acceptance of the “Empire of the Rising Sun.” This “public relations coup”, as we would call it today, dates back to 1898 and the activities of the Director of the Political Affairs Office of the Japanese Foreign Ministry and later Foreign Minister, Hakushaku Uchida Kōsai (November 17, 1865 – March 12, 1936), and has developed into a veritable propaganda campaign over the years.⁵⁴

In fact, Vámbéry’s booklet was directed against Russian expansionism and was a veritable piece of defensive writing in favor of Japan. The country’s war of aggression against the Russian Empire is already presented in the introduction as self-defense and a necessity to defend Japanese independence.⁵⁵ The propagandistic aspect of the enterprise, which was directed against the Russian Empire, was certainly nothing new for Vámbéry. Almost all of his German and French-language publications relating to the advance of Russia into Central Asia have such features. The constantly repeated warnings against an expansion of the Tsars’ sphere of power to India and the threat to British supremacy in South Asia or against a decline in the power of the Empire as a bulwark against despotism should also be seen in this context.

Vámbéry’s work in the service of Japanese diplomacy, which has occasionally been brought into play,⁵⁶ must be viewed with some skepticism. Of course, he was never in the service of Japan – neither directly nor indirectly, and a corresponding, polemically exaggerated interpretation is rather misleading. With his work, he took a position that was in line with the Japanese position, but above all directed against the Russian Empire – although the latter needs not be explicitly emphasized in this form. In some ways he stayed true to his line. Vámbéry was just as little an employee in the diplomatic service of Japan as he was a British-Ottoman “double agent” (– this is also a common misconception in the literature; in fact, the Middle East

⁵¹ R. B. VALLIANT. “The Selling of Japan. Japanese Manipulation of Western Opinion,” in: *Monumenta Nipponica* 29 (4). Winter 1974, 427–428 (after *The Nineteenth Century* LVII. April 1905, 573–576).

⁵² R. B. VALLIANT. “The Selling of Japan”, 429.

⁵³ R. B. VALLIANT. “The Selling of Japan”, 429.

⁵⁴ R. B. VALLIANT. “The Selling of Japan”, 415.

⁵⁵ Á. VÁMBÉRY. *Die gelbe Gefähr*, 4–7.

⁵⁶ GERGELY T. “A japán propaganda szolgálatában,” in: *BBC History – A világtörténelmi magazin* (ohne Jahr), 2–7; SENGÁ T. “Vámbéry Ármín a japán diplomácia szolgálatában az orosz-japán háború idején,” in: *Századok* 128 (3–4). 1994, 723–736.

expert was less of a “secret agent” than an informant and analyst, who diligently wrote reports, but hardly knew how to obtain secret information) – this, too, was an immeasurable exaggeration of his work.⁵⁷ As mentioned, his advocacy against the concept of the “yellow peril” is comparable to his publication activities in German daily newspapers. Here, too, he appeared as the “eternal issuer of warning,” someone who ceaselessly warned the German public about the expanding Tsarist Empire – and according to current knowledge, he was not paid for by the British Foreign Office, the Secret Service, or any other institution in Great Britain.

It is extremely difficult to assess the extent to which some Pan-Turanist enthusiasm, which Vámbéry was not entirely averse to (at least at times)⁵⁸ and which other authors even extended to Japan,⁵⁹ also played a role when writing his work. Such “inclinations” are likely to have played a completely subordinate role, if at all, compared to the geopolitical considerations mentioned.

V. Conclusions

For many, Vámbéry’s small cultural study seems to remind us of his statements, which at times made to let the audience understand the Orient – be it the “Orient” as such, or the Ottoman Empire or the Persia of the Qāğārs as formations struggling for their political survival. As is well known, these statements can be found in many of the works of the great traveler – despotism and certain features of Islam aroused his fierce resistance, so that one can speak of a certain ambivalence of his descriptions of the Near and Middle East. Regarding the statements on China and Japan in *Le Péril Jaune*, however, it should be noted that there are very significant differences in the “pursuit of understanding.” On the one hand, the mentioned ambivalence is not recognizable – at most the highlighting of certain weaknesses with which the supposed danger that allegedly emanates from these “emerging empires” is recognizable, while the mentioned risk should rather be refuted –, on the other hand, his view is here an etic view, based on reporting and correspondence (in contrast to the emic view of the Near and Middle East from which Vámbéry provided something like interior views and on which he based his analyzes). The aforementioned

⁵⁷ His report has been partly published in Kunalalp (2013); with his alleged work as “secret agent” was dealt extensively in M. K. ÖKE. *İngiliz casusu Prof. Arminius Vambéry'nin gizli raporlarında II. Abdülhamid ve dönemi*, (İstanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1983), *Vambéry: Belgelerle bir devletlerarası casusun yaşam öyküsü*, (İstanbul: Bilge Yayıncılık, 1985) and *Saraydaki Casus*, (İstanbul: İrfan Yayınevi, 1991).

⁵⁸ For example in Á. VÁMBÉRY. *Sketches of Central Asia* (London: Wm. H. Allen & Company, 1868), 282–312 the author devoted one chapter to the Turanian question.

⁵⁹ See for example the map of S. Kitagawa and R. Kato printed by the Royal Hungarian Military Cartographic Institute in Budapest 1943 and distributed by the “The Japan Turanian Association”: “Tsuran Minzoku Bunpu Chizu. Ethnographical Card of the Turanians (Uralo-Altaians)” or the activities of the *Magyar-Nippon Társaság* (“Hungarian Nippon Society”) (see FARKAS I. “A Magyar-Nippon Társaság,” in: *Japanológiai körkép* 2007, 87–109).

type of representation, i.e., the ambivalence that can only be ascertained to a limited extent, is in turn owed to the fact that *Le Péril Jaune* was almost a “commissioned work” – as such, however, it has missed its intended purpose (due to the fact that in the end no 10,000 copies were distributed).

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Abstract

Im Beitrag wird Ármin(ius) Vámbérys Behandlung Chinas und Japans beleuchtet. Die Darstellung der Staatenwelt Ostasiens und seiner Gegenwartslage nimmt innerhalb seines Gesamtwerks einen eher bescheidenen Umfang ein, ist weithin in die Untersuchung des russisch-britischen Gegensatzes im Ringen um die Vorherrschaft in Ostasien eingebettet und muß im Nachwirken des Great Game verstanden werden. Vámbérys bekannteste Arbeit zum Gegenstand ist seine kleine Monographie Die gelbe Gefahr. Eine Kulturstudie, die zunächst auf Deutsch in Budapest erschien und im selben Jahr in einer französischen Übersetzung in Paris (Le Péril jaune. Étude sociale) herauskam und für eine westliche Leserschaft den japanischen Standpunkt erläuterte.

Keywords: Ármin(ius) Vámbéry, „Gelbe Gefahr“, Überlebenskampf „des Orients“, Folgen des Russisch-Japanischen Krieges.