Sinophobia: Anxiety, Violence, and the Making of Mongolian Identity



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### creator

Billé, Franck

### type

Image

### coverage

Mongolia

### description

(From the publisher) \*Sinophobia\* is a timely and groundbreaking study of the anti-Chinese sentiments currently widespread in Mongolia. Graffiti calling for the removal of Chinese dot the urban landscape, songs about killing the Chinese are played in public spaces, and rumors concerning Chinese plans to take over the country and exterminate the Mongols are rife. Such violent anti-Chinese feelings are frequently explained as a consequence of China’s meteoric economic development, a cause of much anxiety for her immediate neighbors and particularly for Mongolia, a large but sparsely populated country that is rich in mineral resources. Other analysts point to deeply entrenched antagonisms and to centuries of hostility between the two groups, implying unbridgeable cultural differences.

Franck Billé challenges these reductive explanations. Drawing on extended fieldwork, interviews, and a wide range of sources in Mongolian, Chinese, and Russian, he argues that anti-Chinese sentiments are not a new phenomenon but go back to the late socialist period (1960–1990) when Mongolia’s political and cultural life was deeply intertwined with Russia’s. Through an in-depth analysis of media discourses, Billé shows how stereotypes of the Chinese emerged through an internalization of Russian ideas of Asia, and how they can easily extend to other Asian groups such as Koreans or Vietnamese. He argues that the anti-Chinese attitudes of Mongols reflect an essential desire to distance themselves from Asia overall and to reject their own Asianness. The spectral presence of China, imagined to be everywhere and potentially in everyone, thus produces a pervasive climate of mistrust, suspicion, and paranoia.

Through its detailed ethnography and innovative approach, Sinophobia makes a critical intervention in racial and ethnic studies by foregrounding Sinophobic narratives and by integrating psychoanalytical insights into its analysis. In addition to making a useful contribution to the study of Mongolia, it will be essential reading for anthropologists, sociologists, and historians interested in ethnicity, nationalism, and xenophobia.

### publisher

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