MONGOLIA

Sinophobia: anxiety, violence, and the making of Mongolian identity, by Franck Bille, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2015, 272 pp., US$57.00 (hardback)

In his book *Sinophobia: Anxiety, Violence, and the Making of Mongolian Identity*, Franck Bille points out that to understand anti-Chinese sentiment in contemporary Mongolia, we should not limit our thinking to the traditional Mongolia–China relationship, or seek the answer simply in the current economic and political situation. He argues that, for Mongolia, Sinophobia is not only related to anti-Chinese sentiment, but also reflects the Mongols' dream to be rid of both China and Asia. At the same time, Bille asserts that a discourse of anti-Chinese sentiment, which is similar to "the oriental" in European culture, was imported from the Soviet Union to Mongolia during the 70 years of the Soviet regime in Mongolia. This discourse was internalised by Mongols, creating the Sinophobia in contemporary Mongolia. In September 2006, the author visited Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia, and spent a year there conducting fieldwork. In order to collect a range of discourses related to anti-Chinese sentiment, he covered most of the newspapers in Mongolian as well as other cultural modes of expression such as films, graffiti, songs and music videos.

One of the main contributions of cultural anthropology is to provide a deep understanding of one another's culture. In this sense, Franck Bille's *Sinophobia* should be considered as one of the best books for enabling people who live in English-speaking countries to understand the Mongols' contemporary culture. Mongols are worried that China will take their territory, suck up their resources, and more seriously, extinguish the Mongols physically or biologically. These kinds of worries have caused the Mongols to make a specific value judgment that everything from the south where there are Chinese is poison. Such things as Chinese vegetables and livestock, as well as Chinese characters and Chinese people, are considered poison not only in the physical and biological sense, but also in the cultural and psychological sense. Because of this, the author argues, the Mongols are developing many ways to protect themselves from this poison, such as removing Chinese characters from Chinese restaurants or punishing Mongolian women who have sex with Chinese men. These self-protection activities are accompanied by discursive violence, injurious speech, and sometimes physical violence.

By applying a multifaceted approach to the phenomenon, the author challenges functionalism, which only focuses on the economic and political factors in Mongolia–China relations. Bille uses the method of conscious comparison to shed light on the Mongols' view of China, Russia, Inner Mongolia and Buryatia, as well as of Kazakhs and Tuvans, to depict at once the stability and the liquidity of the cultural identity of the Mongols, and the dynamics of Sinophobia. The reviewer, as a Mongol from Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, read the section on Outer Mongolians' views on Inner Mongols with great interest. How do my outer Mongolian friends imagine me? I have had that simple question in my mind for many years. Since the early 1990s, I have met a range of Mongols from Ulaanbaatar in both my private life and professional work. During that time, my view of Outer Mongols has undergone great changes, from enthusiasm in the early days to despair later, and now to calm. It was a process of developing self-identity for me, during which a dream of "pure Mongolian-ness" shattered in my heart. I am calm now because I have accepted the reality of diverse Mongolian-ness. So how do my Mongolian friends living in Ulaanbaatar think of Inner Mongolians? According to the author, Mongols from the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region are usually treated as a *hyated* (Chinese) in Outer Mongolia. This is not just because Inner Mongols have a Chinese passport; more importantly, their "Mongolian-ness" has changed. According to the author, in the view of Outer Mongols, "Inner Mongols are Mongols gone bad, in the sense that they have become Sinicized" (p. 79).

The book not only contributes to the understanding of Sinophobia in Mongolia, but also provides a solid footing for people to look at anti-Chinese sentiment in other regions, such as Turkey. In July 2015, there was an anti-Chinese protest in Istanbul. Several news reports stated that the protesters were opposed to Chinese government interference in Uighurs' religious life in Xinjiang Autonomous Region. Uighurs consider themselves as belonging to eastern Turkistan, and share the same cultural and religious identity as the Turkish, not the Chinese. During the protest, a Chinese restaurant in Istanbul was attacked by the protesters, but the complexity of the problem is highlighted by the fact that the owner of the restaurant is Turkish and the chef is a Uighur from China. It reminds me of the distress of Inner Mongolian people running a Chinese restaurant in Ulaanbaatar that had been attacked by a local anti-Chinese group. I am wondering if there will come a day when Turkish people will say that Uighurs are Turkish gone bad, in the sense that they have become Sinicised.

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SOUTHEAST ASIA

Oral history in Southeast Asia: memories and fragments, edited by Kah Seng Loh, Ernest Koh, & Stephen Dobbs, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 240 pp., €79.99 (hardback); €66.99 (eBook)

Oral history has opened the way for alternative histories of Southeast Asia. Where documents have been lost, destroyed or never existed, oral sources can prevent stories of times past being lost forever. *Oral History in Southeast Asia* brings together a collection of such histories. The volume demonstrates the rich variety of oral history work taking place across Southeast Asia by historians, social scientists, local academics, activists and foreign researchers.

The book consists of ten chapters, separated according to three themes – Oral History and Official History, Memories of Violence, and Oral Tradition and Heritage – though several chapters speak to more than one of these subjects. The contributions span five Southeast Asian nations – Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines – with a particular focus on Singapore in four of the ten chapters. This volume highlights "fragments", memories that fail to conform to the existing historical narrative and also those that underline the complex relationship between personal narrative and the dominant – often state-sponsored – narrative.

Part 1 explores the relationship between individual narratives and official histories in Singapore. Kevin Blackburn considers memories recorded by trainee teachers who interviewed their elderly relatives about the past. These narratives reveal memories that both counter and conform to the state's official history. Blackburn's contribution also offers important methodological insights into the interviewing process and the significance of cross-generational family interviewing in the Singapore context. Loh Kah Seng uncovers similarly ambivalent memories of the British military withdrawal in the late 1960s and its impact on those who worked at the dockyards. He discovers memories that exist alongside, but do not counter, the official narrative. Ernest Koh's contribution examines the memories of overseas Chinese who served in World War II. These memories sit at the margins of existing historical accounts.

Part 2 focuses on memories of violence. As political landscapes change across Southeast Asia, stories previously too dangerous to tell have slowly begun to surface. Julara Damrongviteetham's