

Genocide on the Mongolian Steppe: First-hand Accounts of Genocide in Southern Mongolia during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Vol. I (*Bôyo naki sôgen: Uchi-Mongoru ni okeru bunka daikakumei, gyakusatsu no kiroku*). Yang Haiying. Translated by Enghebatu Togocho. Originally published in Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2009. IN: Xlibris, 2017. 232 pages. ISBN 9781543429848.

In the 1990s, a handful of scholars of East Asia began rethinking the Chinese past. Before then, most people who studied China had seen its history in (chauvinistic) Chinese terms—even when “Chinese” history included adjacent, non-Sinic civilizations and peoples such as the Manchus.

Learning Manchurian and other non-Chinese languages, revisionist scholars of the 1990s ushered in what would eventually be known as New Qing History, which helped bring dramatic new perspectives to our understanding of East Asia. The Manchus had long been seen as thoroughly Sinicized. But by listening to Manchu voices, as well as other non-Han, non-Chinese sources, New Qing History showed that things looked very different, and more complex, from the Manchurian perspective.

This has certainly been a welcome change. And yet much more remains to be done. Among other non-Sinic groups awaiting a fresh reappraisal as autonomous agents interacting with the Chinese polity, perhaps none is more important than the Mongolians. In this volume, Yang Haiying brings us a continuation—in English for the first time—of his life’s work, which is to reanimate Mongolia in the historical imagination and restore historical agency to the almost universally overlooked Mongolians. The Mongolians are often seen as little more than a sidebar to Chinese history, especially during the modern period; but Yang’s book and career are a reminder that China looks very different when considered from the points of view of the non-Han.

Over six chapters and a very long introductory section, Yang shows that the North China Bureau, the group within the Chinese Communist Party responsible for pacifying and then decimating Southern or Inner Mongolia, ran a campaign of terror, brainwashing, infiltration, espionage and ethnic cleansing, psychologically debilitating the Mongolian people and undermining independence movements at every turn. It goes without saying that this history is missing from official Chinese accounts.

In chapter one, Yang highlights the deep connections among Chinese, Mongolian, and Japanese of various backgrounds—from conservatives to radicals—in the prewar years. Chapter two details how Tugus, one of the three main national separatists, along with Ulaanhuu and Haafungaa, tried to organize Mongolians into a Southern Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party in August 1945 (31). Chapter three reveals the fundamental Han chauvinism and anti-Mongolian prejudice that drove PRC policy in Mongolia, and how many Mongolians nobly resisted the unfolding genocide—including one man, Zutgeech, personal physician to Ulaanhuu (64) and known as the “Mongolian Oskar Schindler.” Chapter four is an oral history-cum-political history—an interview with Prof. Harhuu, a scholar of Mongolian studies, who traces the Cultural Revolution in Mongolia from its origins in Chinese radicalism and anti-Mongolian racism to its spread and devolution into torture sessions and wanton property destruction. This chapter describes in detail the methods of ethnic cleansing and psychological crippling—rape, electric shock, dunking in boiling water and so forth.

In chapter five, Yang interviews another Mongolian scholar, Prof. Linse, who takes an international, comparative view of the Cultural Revolution in Mongolia. This chapter shows how propaganda and language politics played roles in both the Chinese oppression of Mongolia and the Soviet oppression of other nations, such as Hungary. Here, we also see that the Chinese imposed massive abortions on the Mongolians as part of the anti-Mongolian genocide. Chapter six tracks the Cultural Revolution in Mongolia down to the bitter end, as the culture of the Cultural Revolution became ingrained among the peasantry, and the torturing, humiliation,

and genocide of the Mongolians gained momentum. Yang concludes his volume by showing that the Mongolians remain objects of contempt in their own homeland even today.

The study of the CCP's genocide of the Mongolians is not just an academic endeavor for Yang. As an ethnic Mongolian and native Mongolian speaker, Yang personally conducted interviews with many of the people featured in this book. This is also a first-hand account. Yang himself witnessed many of the events described in the book while growing up in Mongolia. Yang describes how, during the Cultural Revolution, members of his family were "identified as 'reactionary, exploiting-class herd-lords'" during the 1967 Movement for Demarcation of Class Identity (lxxv). They suffered much at the hands of the genocidal Han.

Yang has written many other books and scholarly papers in Japanese, and his research uses Mongolian, Chinese, Japanese, and English sources. This erudition is on full display in the present volume. One wishes, however, that Yang or his translator, Ehghebatu Togocho, had included a list of works cited and footnotes or endnotes to guide readers who want to explore sources in more detail. As it seems, a second volume will be forthcoming, however. Perhaps a bibliography will appear later in the series.

The question of research materials points to the challenges and prospects of Yang's endeavors and Mongolian historiography. Like Manchurian, Mongolian is very rarely studied outside its home territory. Unlike with the Qing Dynasty, however, modern Mongolian records were created under communist persecution. Half of Mongolia remains under Chinese control, making it even more difficult to access and translate Mongolian sources than those written by Qing officials in Manchurian. Furthermore, because Yang writes in Japanese and other Asian languages, his work has until now gone almost wholly unremarked by Western scholars. It is therefore hoped that this volume will be the first of many translations of Yang's work, and that similar works can emerge to counter the heavily Sinocentric narratives that have become received wisdom in much English-language historical writing about East Asia.

Genocide on the Mongolian Steppe is a welcome first step to bringing Mongolian history—on Mongolians’ terms—to the fore. Yang’s book is suitable for scholars and researchers, and ideal for an undergraduate course on China or East Asia. Mongolian names are unfamiliar to most English speakers, but Yang and his translator go out of their way to help the reader keep track of who is doing what and where. As the People’s Republic of China continues its long march to regional hegemony—which often involves clashes with non-Han peoples on China’s peripheries—it is essential that a more diverse view of the East Asian past be cultivated. *Genocide on the Mongolian Steppe* marks a very important new departure in that endeavor.

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