



The Discourse of Race in Modern China

Frank Dikotter

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First published in 1992, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* rapidly became a classic, showing for the first time on the basis of detailed evidence how and why racial categorisation became so widespread in China. After the country's devastating defeat against Japan in 1895, leading reformers like Yan Fu, Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei turned away from the Confucian classics to seek enlightenment abroad, hoping to find the keys to wealth and power on the distant shores of Europe. Instead, they discovered the notion of 'race', and used new evolutionary theories from Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer to present a universe red in tooth and claw in which 'yellows' competed with 'whites' in a deadly struggle for survival. After the fall of the empire in 1911, prominent politicians and writers in republican China continued to measure, classify and rank people from around the world according to their supposed biological features, all in the name of science. Racial thinking remains popular in the People's Republic of China, as serologists, geneticists and anthropometrists continue to interpret human variation in terms of 'race'. This new edition has been revised and expanded to include a new chapter taking the reader up to the twenty-first century.

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