

“Mongolian Octopus—Its Grip On Australia”

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Published in the Sydney based *The Bulletin Magazine* on August 21, 1886, “The Mongolian Octopus – His Grip on Australia” cartoon was pointedly used as a form of propaganda against Mongolian & Chinese immigration. The cartoon illustrates an octopus with a human head and eight outstretched arms. On each of these arms is a different term, such as typhoid or immorality. These terms, along with the octopus itself, all portrayed racist views of Chinese and Mongolian immigrants.

The head of the octopus is the first striking detail. The narrow eyes, large forehead, and buck-teeth are all negative stereotypes of Chinese culture. The fact that the human head is attached to an octopus’ body is another racist comparison to the immigrants resembling animals. On the arms of the octopus are eight crimes that these immigrants were thought to bring into Australian society. These crimes were “Fan Tan” and “Pak-Ah-Pu,” which were gambling games, “Customs Robbery,” “Bribery,” “Cheap Labor,” “Immorality,” “Typhoid,” “Small Pox,” and “Opium.” Each of the crimes listed were various racial stereotypes, such as Chinese disease, cheap labor, and gambling addictions. Many of these crimes were extremely unfounded, and were only circulated due to increased greed during the Australian Gold Rush.

