



Restored Korean Ethnicity and China's Post-Socialist Local Development in the Mid-1970s and 1980s: *Yanbian Koreans in Perspective*

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between Korean-Chinese ethnicity and China's post-socialist local development. To do this, it focuses on the experiences of the Korean-Chinese population of Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture during the mid-1970s and 1980s. It describes how political rehabilitation after the Cultural Revolution, economic liberalization, and improvement in Sino-North Korea relations restored the local and transnational Koreanness of the Yanbian Koreans. Local and transnational Koreanness served as important determinants for Yanbian's development. The study concludes that the restoration of minority ethnicity was directly connected to the early stages of China's post-socialist local development.

Keywords: Yanbian Koreans, local development, ethnicity, post-socialist China, North Korea, political rehabilitation after the Cultural Revolution, economic reform

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Introduction

In the mid and late-1970s, China put an end to the Cultural Revolution (CR) and began to promote economic reform. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping (hereafter Deng), China's political and economic system began to be reorganized in ways that ran counter to the tenets of CR.¹ However, the reform was not only promoted in mainstream politics and economics, but also in the government's relations with ethnic minority communities. For this reason, it is necessary to ask how the relationship between ethnic minorities and local development changed as the national agenda moved from class struggle to economic development. Ethnic minorities such as Tibetans, Uyghurs, Hui, and Mongolians have been the primary subjects of research into the relationship between minority traditions (ethnicity, culture and religious) and national integration (X. Zhang 2016).² However, the Korean-Chinese³ case highlights important elements in the link between ethnic minorities and China's drive for economic expansion (or transformation) because, as past research suggests, they can be described as a neoliberal (or globalized) ethnic minority (W. Park 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; W. Park et al. 2020).⁴

There are about two million Korean Chinese distributed across Northeast China, of whom about 800,000 live in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (YKAP) alongside members of other ethnic groups such as the Han, Manchu, Mongol, and Hui.⁵ For this ethnic group, the 20th century was a time of shifting fortunes. When the Anti-Rightist Campaign was promoted nationwide in the 1950s the daily life of Yanbian's population was strongly influenced by radical politics, with the Korean Chinese

1. See Vogel (2011); MacFarquhar (1997); Putterman (1993); and Naughton (2007).

2. On China's logic regarding the relationship between the state and ethnic minorities, see Fei (1999).

3. Chaoxianzu in Chinese, Jungguk dongpo or Joseonjok in Korean.

4. On the economic and political contexts of changes of Yanbian authority in the post-Cold War and during globalization, see W. Park (2020d) and J. Kim (2016).

5. On Korean-Chinese history, see W. Park (2019), Suh and Shultz (1990), and Cathcart (2010).

oppressed by the leftists because of their Korean ethnicity. Even in the 1960s, the CR forced the Korean-Chinese community to become more radically involved in class struggle than other ethnic groups. To make matters worse, Mao's nephew infiltrated Yanbian and directed Han Chinese nationalists to physically and ideologically attack Korean-Chinese people (W. Park 2019).⁶ The CR caused not only class struggle but also ethnic conflict in Yanbian. Meanwhile, the relationship between Beijing and Pyongyang deteriorated sharply as the two regimes took different stances toward Moscow's domestic politics. The Han Chinese far left⁷ publicly denounced the Korean Chinese in newspaper articles, public squares, and even in official government publications for supposedly being North Korean spies and traitors. As a result, Yanbian Koreans had to go into hiding or discard their ethnicity. The political cost of a degraded relationship between Beijing and Pyongyang had to be paid by the Korean Chinese (W. Park 2019).⁸

However, since the mid and late-1970s, with the end of class struggle and beginning of economic reform, the reorganized Yanbian authority could punish what they saw as the CR's original sin and restore its victims' honor. At the same time, the relationship between China and North Korea was repaired and Yanbian pursued economic reforms (liberalization) in rural and urban sectors in order to develop people's standards of living. In this aspect, political rehabilitation, Sino-North Korean relations, and economic reform are the key factors in the relationship between the Korean-Chinese ethnic group (more specifically, ethnicity) and local development in post-Mao China. However, there has been little research on this topic and almost all existing studies on the Korean-Chinese population under post-socialist reform have focused on the socioeconomic changes after 1990s.⁹

6. See also Shin (2016).

7. Here the term "far left" denotes radical Maoists and supporters of the Gang of Four. The far left (so named far left by reformists) included not only Han Chinese, but also Korean Chinese. The term "Han Chinese far left" refers to the Han Chinese people who were organized by radical Maoist cadres in Yanbian. The distinction between left and right in post-socialist China is different from the distinction in Western or liberal societies.

8. See also Tsurushima (1979).

9. These studies can be classified into three categories. In the first category are studies

This study aims to explore the relationship between Korean-Chinese ethnicity and China's post-socialist local development.¹⁰ To do this, it focuses on the experiences of Yanbian Koreans in the mid-1970s and the 1980s, when the CR ended and economic reform became the government's new focus. In order to explain this relationship, it will answer the following four questions. First, what effect did China's domestic and international post-socialist politics have on Korean-Chinese ethnicity? Second, what role did the ethnicity of Korean-Chinese politicians play in local economic development? Third, what role did the ethnicity of Korean-Chinese intellectuals play in local socio-cultural development? Fourth, what role did the ethnicity of Korean-Chinese merchants play in the development of trade between China and North Korea?

Domestic and International Post-Socialist Politics and Restoration of Local and Transnational Koreanness

In 1976, when all institutions flew the national flag at half-staff to mourn the death of Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, Yanbian's far left and the followers of the Gang of Four (GF) continued to attack the "right wing" (AYKAP 1990, 273–276; YALPH 1989, 347).¹¹ The political situation began to change after

interested in Korean-Chinese identity (national and ethnic). These aim to explore which ethnic or national group Korean Chinese prefer to belong to (Kang 2008; Choi 2001; W. Kim 2010). In the second category belong studies interested in the impact of globalization. These attempt to analyze the characteristics of transnational migration and citizenship (Olivier 1992; Kwon 2015; Luova 2006, 2008, 2009; W. Park 2017; W. Park 2020). A third group of studies are interested in internal changes within the Korean-Chinese population in China (Colin 2003; D. Kim and J. Kim 2005; Gao 2010; H. Kim 2003).

10. Here development denotes the emergence and growth of the reformist or liberal social, economic and political subject and systems (or institutions). Additionally, the author wants to stress that the development of Yanbian was the result of a collective effort on the part of multiple ethnic groups, including Korean, Han, Manchu, Mongol, and Hui. However, to achieve the necessary focus to address our research question this paper concentrates on the Korean ethnic group.
11. The Archives of Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (Yanbian chaoxian zuzi zhizhou danganguan in Chinese) and the Yanbian Association of Local Party History (Yeonbyeon

Mao's death (September 9, 1976). The far left had to be incorporated into a political movement critical of the GF under the leadership of Hua Guofeng (hereafter Hua). However, just because Yanbian's far left criticized the GF did not mean they supported Deng. They did their utmost to maintain the existing political order (class struggle) and economic system (people's commune).

From the end of September 1977, the situation changed significantly. As the political circumstances in Beijing changed, reformers in Yanbian began to gain power. The reformist Yanbian government defined the followers of the GF as counter-revolutionary revisionists. The government began special projects in factories, mines, enterprises, public services, people's communes, police offices, the culture and art department, and the science and technology department to hunt down members of the far left and criticize their atrocities (AYKAP 1990, 279; YALPH 1989, 350). This project was launched under the direction of newly-appointed Korean-Chinese leader Cho Nam-ki, whose Chinese name was Zhao Nanqi (Hwang 2016).¹²

After the project was realized to a certain level, the authorities began to rehabilitate the honor of those who had been unjustly framed as being part of a "counter-revolutionary mob," "spies," or members of the "underground Kuomintang."¹³ On June 20, 1978, the Yanbian government held a rehabilitation conference for Chu Deok-hae (Zhu Dehai in Chinese), the first leader of Yanbian. More than 100,000 people listened by radio in about 200 conference halls (AYKAP 1990, 285).¹⁴ Chu had been framed for spying for North Korea and local (Korean) nationalists. He died whilst under surveillance, confinement, and "reform through labor" on a farm in Hubei

dangsa hakhoe in Korean) provided authoritative materials on the history of Yanbian.

12. On April 20, 1978, the Jilin Provincial Party Committee appointed Cho as the leader of Yanbian. General Cho was the former vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. I use the Korean names of Yanbian Koreans because all the primary materials I consulted are in Korean.
13. During the mad period of the CR, 2,653 people died in Yanbian. Among these, 1,483 people committed suicide due to persecution, and 1,270 were beaten to death. In addition, 2,980 were injured or disabled as a result of assault, and more than 100,000 were directly or indirectly affected by violence (YALPH 1989, 354).
14. For Chu's biography, see Klein and Clark (1971, 254–256).

province (Jang 1985; Jeon 1978). After Chu was rehabilitated other Korean-Chinese politicians also underwent the same process.

By March 1, 1979, about 91 percent of economic and social institutions of Yanbian were able to operate again. As of mid-November 1979, rehabilitation was almost finished (AYKAP 1990, 290–291). After the task was completed, the number of Korean-Chinese cadres recovered to 26,000, which was about 60 percent of all cadres in Yanbian. This is similar to pre-CR numbers. In 1962, for example, Korean-Chinese cadres had accounted for 64 percent all cadres in Yanbian (C. Kim et al. 2017, 3).

During the period when political rehabilitation was being promoted, China also actively sought to improve relations with North Korea. In May 1978, Hua led core members of the central government on a visit to Pyongyang. This historical event was held 15 years after China's then head of state, Liu Shaoqi, had visited Pyongyang in 1963. Kim Il-sung greeted the guests at Pyongyang Station. Pyongyang treated these guests with the highest level of respect and hospitality during the six days of their stay in North Korea. To hold a welcome rally, Pyongyang gathered 100,000 people in Moranbong Stadium. Kim also guided the guests by train to Hamheung, the model industrial city of North Korea.¹⁵ In September of the same year, Deng visited Pyongyang for the thirtieth anniversary of the regime's foundation, then he attended the Central Government Conference for a celebration in Pyongyang Stadium and visited Hamheung with Kim. Thousands of people welcomed the Chinese guests.¹⁶

In 1982, Deng led a group of China's new leaders, including Hu Yaobang on a visit to North Korea. Beijing and Pyongyang discussed economic affairs and the international and domestic political situation (Meng 2013). In September of that same year, Kim visited Beijing. Hu, Deng, Zhao Ziyang, and Deng Yingchao greeted the Pyongyang guests at Beijing Station, and after the visitors had finished in Beijing, Deng

15. See *Yanbian Daily* (1978a, 1978b, 1978c). The *Yanbian Daily* (*Yeonbyeon ilbo*) is one of the most important periodicals in Yanbian and is published by the Yanbian government. The newspaper has more than 70 years of history.

16. See *Yanbian Daily* (1978d, 1978e, 1978f).

accompanied Kim on a trip to Chengdu. The two leaders held a one-on-one meeting on the train to Chengdu before Deng took Kim to Du Fu Cottage and E'Mei Machinery Plant. About 8,000 people held a welcome ceremony for the North Korean leader in Chengdu.¹⁷

In September 1983, when diplomatic relations between Beijing and Pyongyang were in full flow, Deng visited Yanbian. Although, there is no clear evidence, we can assume that Beijing and Pyongyang had discussed the Yanbian issue. After visiting Mt. Changbai (Mt. Baekdu in Korean), Deng left an inscription calling for “a swift and improved building up of the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture” to the Yanbian government and people (D. Zhang 1998).¹⁸ Deng’s visit was a signal for Yanbian Koreans to grasp the opportunity for development whilst relations between China and North Korea were thawing.

Hu’s visit to Pyongyang in May 1984 had a major impact on Korean-Chinese society. This was followed by a trip to Yanbian by core members of Chinese government.¹⁹ Hu visited the 6.1 Korean Kindergarten to meet children before inscribing “Memorial of Comrade Zhu Dehai” on Chu’s newly constructed tombstone. He then visited Yanbian University (YBU) where he left an inscription urging all members of the university to “Strive to Cultivate Minzu Talents” (YALPH 1989, 398–399). When it became known that Hu was visiting Yanbian, a large crowd of Korean Chinese gathered. Hu said, “For the first time in my life, I have been very welcomed” (D. Kim 2017, 448–449).²⁰

On May 15, three days after Hu left Yanbian, Kim made a brief stop at Tumen Station (Tumen is a Sino-North Korean border city in Yanbian) on the way to Moscow. It is difficult to imagine that Kim Il-sung, one of the

17. See *Yanbian Daily* (1982a, 1982b, 1982c, 1982d).

18. Deng wrote this inscription on stationary in the Yuehua Hotel (near the Changbai waterfall).

19. Besides Yang Shangkun, Qian Liren, and Xu Bei. Hu Qili and He Zhengwen also met Hu’s team there.

20. Hu Yaobang asked Lee Deok-soo (Li Dezhu) about Lim Min-ho (Lin Mingao), the former president of YBU. Lim had been the president of YBU when Hu Yaobang visited Yanbian in 1956.

leaders of the Korean independence movement in Manchuria during the Japanese colonial period and the highest authority in Pyongyang, a man who insisted on exerting political influence in the Yanbian region until the foundation of the Yanbian Autonomous Prefecture in 1952, was able to visit Yanbian. On the Chinese side, representatives from the central government, Shenyang Military Area Command, Jilin province, the Yanbian government, and members of the public welcomed the guests and saw them off cordially at the conclusion of their visit.

Thanks to the exchanges between Beijing and Pyongyang, the local governments and parties were also able to begin a variety of diplomatic exchanges. The North Hamgyeong Provincial Delegation visited Yanbian in 1980, and this was recorded as the first official exchange between local parties since the CR. In addition to the exchanges between major cities, delegations from Yanbian's counties were able to visit neighboring counties across the Tumen River (see Table 1).

Table 1. Exchanges between Local Governments and Parties in Yanbian and North Korea

Year	Content
1980	North Hamgyeong Provincial Delegation (NHPD) of the Worker's Party of (North) Korea (WPK) visit Yanji in the morning, and depart for Changchun in the evening (invited by Jilin Provincial Committee of Chinese Communist Party [CCP])
1981	NHPD visits Yanji
1983	NHPD of WPK visits Yanji
1984	Ryanggang Provincial Delegation (RPD) of WPK visits Yanji
	South Hamgyeong Provincial Delegation (SHPD) visits Yanji
	Antu County Delegation visits Jiyeon
	Chongjin City Friendship Delegation (CCFD) visits Yanji
1985	Military, government and party officials of Friendship Delegations of five North Korean counties visit Hunchun county, Tumen, Longjing, Helong, and Antu, and participate in the commemoration of the 35th anniversary of the foundation of the People's Republic of China
	Tumen Friendship Delegation (TFD) visits Onseong
	Onseong Delegation (OD) visits Tumen and Yanji
	CCFD visits Yanji and Tumen

	Yanbian Prefectural Delegation (YPD) visits Chongjin
	NHPD visits Yanji
	RPD of WPK visits Yanji
	NHPD of WPK visits Yanji; secretary of Yanbian Prefectural Committee of the CCP, Zhang Dejiang, holds reception dinner (from 2013 to 2018, Zhang Dejiang was chairman of the National People's Congress of China)
1986	CCFD visits Yanbian Xinhua Printing Factory, Yanji No. 1 Weaving Factory, and also visits Yanji, Antu, Dunhua, Jilin, and Changchun
	Friendship Delegations of Hunchun, Helong, Longjing, and Tumen visit Saetbyul, Musan, Hoeryeong, and Onseong. Participate in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the signing of the "China-North Korea Friendly Cooperation Mutual Assistance Treaty"
	YPD visits Chongjin
	RPD visits Yanji
	YPD visits North Korea to participate in commemoration of the 38th anniversary of the Foundation of DPRK
	North Hamgyeong Provincial Inspector Delegation visits Yanbian
	CCFD visits Yanji, Antu, Tumen, Wangqing and Longjing
1987	National Meteorological Worker's Delegation of North Korea visits Yanji en route to Pyongyang; also visit Yanbian Meteorological Bureau
	RPD of WPK visits Yanbian to participate in the commemoration of the 35th anniversary of the foundation of the YKAP
	RPD visits Yanbian
	YPD visits Chongjin, Kimchaek, and Pyongyang
1988	Kimchaek City Friendship Delegation visits Yanji
	RPD visits Changchun, Beijing, and Jilin; also visits Yanbian Bus Factory, Yanbian Xinhua Printing Factory, Yanbian Weaving Factory, Yanbian Museum, Yanji West Market, and some rural families

Source: YALPH (1989), AYKAP (1990).

In addition to the exchanges between local governments and parties, exchanges began between local police and foreign affairs departments. This was because Korean Chinese were allowed to visit their North Korean relatives and permitted to engage in cross-border private trade with North Koreans around 1985. Korean Chinese could visit the North Korean borderlands with a pass issued by local public security authorities in China and North Korea. Due to these personnel exchanges, the public security and

Table 2. Exchanges between Local External Affairs and Public Security Departments in Yanbian and North Korea

Year	Content
1986	RPD of Foreign Affairs visits Yanji, Longjing, Antu, and Wangqing
	YPD of Foreign Affairs visits Hyesan
	Ryu Man-Bok, consul general of the DPRK Consulate General in Shenyang, visits Yanbian
	NHPD of Foreign Affairs visits Yanbian
1987	YPD of Foreign Affairs visits Hamgyeongbuk-do province and Chongjin City to negotiate the exchange plans for 1987
	YPD of Public Security visits Chongjin, and participates in the Commemoration of the 55th anniversary of the foundation of the People's Army of North Korea
1988	YPD of Public Security visits North Korea (at invitation of the Security Department of Hamgyeongbuk-do province)
	YPD of Foreign Affairs visits Hamgyeongbuk-do province

Sources: YALPH (1989), AYKAP (1990).

foreign affairs departments of each side needed meet regularly. North Korean diplomats also visited Yanbian (see Table 2).

In summary, thanks to the political liquidation of the CR, Korean-Chinese elites were able to be rehabilitated. China's top leaders visited Yanbian, the grave of a symbolic Korean-Chinese leader, and Yanbian University, which was the institution most damaged during the CR. The changes in domestic Chinese politics restored the *local Koreanness* of Yanbian Koreans. Korean Chinese were able to openly identify as Koreans in China, celebrate their culture, and rehabilitate their political figures. In addition, exchanges between central governments led to active diplomatic (or political) exchanges between local governments. At the same time, although it was an informal and non-political visit, North Korea's supreme leader Kim Il-sung visited Yanbian. These changes in international politics restored the *transnational Koreanness* of Yanbian Koreans. Korean Chinese began interacting with the populations and governments of other countries on the basis of their ethnic identity.

Korean-Chinese Governmental Leadership and Local Economic Development

As in other regions of China, agricultural reform was as the top of the agenda in Yanbian, and from December 1978 to October 1984, the Yanbian authorities pursued various agricultural reforms. The first step was the introduction of the Household Contract Responsibility System (HCRS). The D production team in Dunhua County was the first people's commune to introduce the HCRS. Peasant families could contract the land with the collective based on the number of family members. At the same time, the collective sold livestock such as horses and oxen to the family based on the instruction of higher-level government. Under this system, rural families sold a certain amount of their produce to the country or collective based on the contracted land size, with the family allowed the excess. Thanks to the HCRS, in 1979 this poor county produced more than 100,000kg of grain, and the income per capita increased to 400 yuan. This was 3.3 times and 7.5 times that of the previous year, respectively. Before this economic reform, this county had to be supported by the national government every year. However, in the first year of the reform, it sold about 5,000 kg grain and paid off all debts to the national government (S. Park 2017, 18–20).

The H production brigade of Longjing County was a typical example of how brigades operated under the Household Full Responsibility System (HFRS). Park, Ryong-ho, the director of reform reorganized the existing eight production brigades into 22 production teams in order to introduce HCRS. The collective distributed or sold land, fixed assets, and livestock to the families. In the spring of 1983, this production brigade introduced HFRS. The HFRS process was much more difficult than HCRS as its principles were similar to that of private farming in the late 1940s. Park held meetings with farmers several times to repeat and emphasize that HFRS was the best policy for China, often quoting Deng's phrase "black cat or white cat, if it can catch mice, it's a good cat", a saying he suggested peasants learn and discuss the meaning of. Although the introduction process was very difficult, the initiative of peasants, the production output, and the income of rural families all increased after HFRS was introduced (R. Park 2006, 439–441).

By January 10, 1983 the production responsibility system had been introduced to 7,341 production teams, and of these, 7,040 (or 94.8%) introduced HFRS (R. Park 2006, 380–381). By April 1984, the number of production teams that had introduced the family responsibility system increased to 98.3 percent, and the proportion of teams using the HFRS rose to 98.1 percent (R. Park 2006, 397–398). By mid-1984 the introduction of HFRS in Yanbian was almost complete.

The government also tried to foster Specialized Households (SH) in order to develop the agricultural commodity economy and diversify the relationship between agriculture and non-agriculture (S. Park 2017, 20). The SH were rural households engaged in growing fruit or vegetables, the fishing industry, the livestock industry, or floriculture. In 1984, the Yanbian government established a policy on the development of SH. There were ten major parts to this policy. First, the government looked to encourage rural families to become one of the various types of SH. Which type would be best for a family depended on its resources and economic conditions. Second, according to the policy, the HFRS was to be introduced in a way conducive to stability, and the length of land contracts were to be increased to 15 years. Third, the SH was to be proactively developed. Fourth, the government was to permit and encourage rural families to engage in transportation and business. Fifth, the government was to urge farmers to migrate to cities (the farmers would need to secure their own food and housing) to engage in businesses beneficial to social stability. Sixth, the government was to permit farmers to employ talented people at their own expense. Seventh, the employment of workers by rural collectives or individuals was to be permitted. Eighth, sectors of the local government, such as economic planning, agriculture and forestry, industry, transportation, commerce and trade, and science and technology, were to support the development of SH. Ninth, the legal rights of SH were to be protected. Tenth, SH must observe the law and could engage in business under the instruction of related government institutions (YALPH 1989, 405–406). Thanks to the government's proactive policy, the number of SH increased from 16,197 in 1983 to 59,056 in 1984, and the proportion expanded from 7.5 to 27.5 percent of all rural households (YALPH 1989,

403–404). SH was an emerging form of private economic unit the promotion of which aimed at developing rural productivity and commerce in the 1980s.

In addition to rural reforms, economic reform was also promoted in urban areas. According to Cho Ryong-ho (Zhao Longhao in Chinese, the leader of the Yanbian government), Yanbian's industries had been seriously damaged during the CR (Jo 2006, 194), particularly those related to energy and power production. Before 1980, Longjing Thermoelectric Power Plant produced 6,000kw of electricity, which was not enough to restore industrial production. Thanks to economic support from the Jilin provincial government, however, Yanbian was able to construct a new 70,000kw thermoelectric power plant in Liushuchuan. With the power problems solved, the government developed its textile industry, constructing the Yanji Textile Factory to complement the existing Antu Textile Factory. These two factories were able to solve the shortage of daily necessities. The year 1982 would see the 30th anniversary of the foundation of Yanbian, and in 1979 the local government began planning ten construction projects to mark the occasion. Nine of these projects were finished before 1981 (Jo 2006, 194–195). In addition to these construction projects, the Yanbian government identified beer and tobacco production as key local industries (S. Heo 2017; Il 2017), expanded the existing Yanji Beer Factory's capacity from 5,000 to 50,000 tons per year, and began construction of the Yanji Tobacco Factory (Jo 2006, 195–196).

In 1983, the Yanbian government founded the Association of Individual Industrial and Commercial Workers (Gaeche gongsangeop geulloja hyeophoe) and established a series of policies aimed at developing a private business-centered urban service economy (YALPH 1989, 387). It also tried to support the local transportation industry. In order to create distribution channels between rural and urban areas, the prefectural government formed Supply and Marketing Cooperatives in eight affiliated cities and counties (YALPH 1989, 377).

In 1979, there were 544 enterprises in Yanbian, including both Industrial Enterprises Owned by the Whole People and Collective Owned Enterprises. Of these, 367 were able to exceed their annual planned

production. In 1979, industrial production increased 7.7 percent more than planned, and up 7.4 percent from 1978 (YALPH 1989, 361). Following continuous investment and policies designed to enhance productivity, Yanbian's gross industrial output was recorded at 1.38 billion yuan in 1983—an increase of 7 percent compared to 1982. Of the major industrial products, 26 completed or exceeded national plans, and 27 products improved in quality (YALPH 1989, 392).²¹ The 1980s saw Yanbian's economy and standard of living grow steadily, and by the end of the decade gross social product, gross industrial and agricultural product, and financial revenue had increased 8.9 times, 7.2 times, and 140 times, respectively, relative to 1952 (YALPH 1989, 479).²²

Yanbian also promoted active industrial and economic exchanges (trade, commerce, electric power, communication, agriculture, and manufacturing) with neighboring North Korean local authorities. For example, trading companies in Yanbian and North Korea's Hamgyeongbuk-do province signed trade agreements and began joint management of businesses both in China and North Korea. North Korean experts in construction, water utilization, and the paper industry visited Yanbian, whilst Korean-Chinese experts in agriculture visited North Korea. China and North Korea also cooperated in a project for international communication (see Table 3).

In summary, Yanbian faithfully followed the Chinese central government's economic liberalization policy. Because economic reform was advanced simultaneously with political rehabilitation, economic liberalization was naturally supported by the Korean-Chinese political elite. From their perspective, economic development of the reorganized Korean Autonomous Prefecture was the most important mission. Thus, as an aspect of ethnicity, local Koreanness here served as a determinant helping Korean-Chinese elites develop their ethnic hometown. At the same time, with economic opening, Yanbian also promoted active economic and industrial

21. Yanbian also developed the Township and Village Enterprise.

22. Yanbian and the neighboring regions in the Soviet Far East began cross-border trade from the mid-1980s.

Table 3. Exchanges between Local Economic and Industrial Departments in Yanbian and North Korea

Year	Content
Trade and Commerce	
1982	Yanbian Prefectural Trading Company and North Hamgyeong Provincial Dumangang Trading Company sign agreements on cross-border trade
1984	Delegations of Helong and Musan sign agreement on cross-border trade
1986	YPD visits Chongjin
1988	North Hamgyeong Provincial Trading Company and Yanji Food Service Company begin running the joint-venture Duman Hotel in China
Construction	
1984	Longjing Delegation (LD) of Construction visits Heoryeong and Chongjin
1987	Onseong Delegation (OD) of water utilization visits Yanji
	OD of construction materials visits Yanji
1988	YPD of construction visits Chongjin, Hamheung, and Kimchaek
Electric Power and Communication	
1984	NHPD of posts and telecom visits Yanbian to participate in a conference on international communication between Yanji and Chongjin
1985	Hunchun and Saetbyeol open an international calling service
1988	RPD visits Yanbian to discuss the problem of Shuangmufeng Guard Post's (Chinese side) use of North Korean electricity
Agriculture	
1984	LD of agriculture visits Hoeryeong and Chongjin
1987	Hoeryeong delegation of vegetable and livestock farms visits Longjing and Yanji
	NHPD of agriculture visits Yanbian
1988	NHPD of deer breeding industry visits Dunhua Deer Farm
	NHPD of vegetable farms visits Yanji, Tumen, and Longjing
Manufacturing Industry	
1987	Samjiyeon industrial delegation visits Yanji
1988	RPD of paper industry visits Yanbian
	North Korean paper industry delegation visits Shixian Paper Mill in Tumen

Sources: YALPH (1989), AYKAP (1990).

exchange with local governments in North Korean. Allowing the Korean-Chinese local elites to restore their transnational Koreanness, helped them pursue these exchanges.

Korean-Chinese Intellectuals and Local Socio-cultural Development

After the rehabilitation of Korean-Chinese politicians, Yanbian began the process of restoring the reputation of Korean-Chinese intellectuals, a significant number of whom had been oppressed during the CR.

On July 14, 1978, Lim Minho, the former vice president of Yanbian University (YBU) was rehabilitated. Over the following months 157 teachers and cadres of Yanbian's educational institutions were also rehabilitated. Jeong Kyu-chang, a professor at the Medical College of YBU, clearly remembered 1979, the year he was rehabilitated and restored. The far left had produced enough "black documents" on him to fill two large bags. He received them in the college's boiler room and threw them into the fire. He said he felt liberated from darkness after they had been burnt (Jeong 2006, 20). Bang Hak-bong, a professor in the Department of History at YBU, was also a victim of the CR. He regained Party membership, honor, occupation, and his role at the university, and resumed his course on Bohai history (Bang 2006, 272). Thanks to the rehabilitation of Korean-Chinese professors and teachers, the local educational institutions were able to resume normal education.

Korean-Chinese artists and their performances, such as musicals and folk singing, were also able to return to the stage. In July 1978, about 40 soloists and 4 senior artists returned to work, and in August, 55 artists and 13 works of art were rehabilitated. These included the musical, "The Son of Changbaek"; the local opera, "Red Sisters"; the "Farmers' Dance" folk dance; and the folktale, "Clean Sky Lake Water" (AYKAP 1990, 286). In 1978, as senior and representative artist, Heo Dong-Hwal was able to regain his role as vice director of Yanbian Art Troupe (YAT), director of the Art Committee of Yanbian, and producer. He was the primary artist behind the musical, "The Son of Changbaek," and the Korean folk opera, "Simcheongjeon" (Filial

Daughter Simcheong). After rehabilitation and restoration, he was selected to be a member of the Political Consultative Conference of Yanbian and designated director of YAT in 1981 (D. Heo 2006, 128–129).

However, although many intellectuals were rehabilitated, they found that significant gaps in cultural knowledge had developed in the ten years during which the CR had forced intellectuals to cease research and performances. So, in order to address these problems and develop Korean-Chinese arts and scholarship, intellectuals began to learn from the people who shared the same (or similar) culture. This was the primary reason for socio-cultural exchanges between Korean Chinese and North Korean intellectuals.

Exchanges between local artistic groups and sports teams were also actively promoted, with North Korean troupes warmly welcomed in Yanbian. The exchanges were not limited to performances. In 1988, the North Hamgyeong Provincial Troupe was invited by the Yanbian government to initiate a short course for Yanbian artists. They taught Korean dance, Korean vocal music, and Korean techniques of stage art for five hours a day. In addition to cultural exchanges, sports exchanges between the two sides were also prevalent (see Table 4).

Table 4. Exchanges of Local Troupe and Sports

Year	Content
Troupe	
1979	RPD performs in Yanbian
1981	NHPD performs in Yanji
1982	RPD (Student) performs in Yanji and Tumen
1987	Advance Team of NHPD visits Yanji, Tumen, Wangqing, and Longjing
	Advance Team of YPD visits Chongjin, Kimchaek, and Hoeryeong
	NHPD performs in Yanbian
	NHPD performs in Yanbian in commemoration of the 35th anniversary of the founding of Yanbian prefecture
	YPD performs at Chongjin, Kimchaek, Pyongyang, and Hoeryeong

1988	Members of NHPD teach Korean dance, Korean sound and melody, dance orthography, singing method for Korean vocal music, and Korean techniques of stage art to Korean-Chinese artists for 5 hours a day
Sports	
1980	Ryanggang Provincial Ice Hockey Team visits Yanbian and holds a friendly match against local team
1985	Yanbian Prefectural Football Team holds a friendly match against North Hamgyeong Provincial Football Team in Tumen city
1988	North Hamgyeong Provincial Football Team visits Yanbian and holds friendly matches against Jilian Provincial Football Team, Jilin Provincial Youth Football Team, and Yanbian Construction Company Football Team in Yanji city, Helong county, and Longjing county
	National Womens' Football Team of North Korea visits Yanbian and holds friendly matches against Daqing Football Team and Yanbian Football Team in Tumen city and Yanji city

Sources: YALPH (1989), AYKAP (1990).

Table 5 shows exchanges between intellectuals in the fields of education, publishing, academia, and science. The education exchanges were focused on the Korean language and educational content for Korean-Chinese children and teens, and they generated co-published material. The publishers in Yanbian introduced North Korean content for growing Korean-Chinese children. Universities were also busy organizing exchanges. Professors from the Department of Korean Language and Korean History at Kim Il Sung University visited YBU, and professors from YBU visited Pyongyang. In 1988, the Delegation of the North Korean Academy of Social Sciences (NKASS) visited the Yanbian Academy of Social Sciences (YASS) and YBU, and donated the vernacular Korean version of the *Annals of the Joseon Dynasty* (*Joseon wangjo sillok*) to these institutions (see Table 5).

With political rehabilitation, Korean-Chinese intellectuals were able to return to their positions. From the perspective of Korean-Chinese intellectuals, the development and restoration of Korean-Chinese education, academia, and arts was the most important outcome. As an aspect of ethnicity, local Koreanness served as a determinant for intellectuals to contribute to their ethnic hometown's socio-cultural development. At the same time, with the policy to open up relations with North Korea, Yanbian was able to promote cultural exchanges with North Koreans. In order to

Table 5. Academic, Educational and Media Exchanges between Yanbian and North Korea

Year	Content
1984	Helong County Delegation of Children's Education visits Musan to study children's educational content
1985	Media workers from Hamgyeongbuk-do province visit Yanji
1986	National Delegation of North Korean Writers visit Yanbian
	Yanbian People's Press and North Korea Art Press agree to co-publish <i>Children's Intelligence and Education Encyclopedia</i>
	Saetbyul County Delegation of Science and Technology visits Yanji
	Professor Park Sihyung (Department of History) and Professor Kwon Seungmo (Department Korean Language) of Kim Il Sung University participate in a conference held by Yanbian University
1987	YPD for pear tree cultivation visits North Korea to study cultivation techniques and methods of fruit production
	RPD for education visits Yanbian University, Yanbian Agricultural College, Yanbian Arts College, Yanbian No. 1 Senior Middle School, Yanji Youth Palace, and Yanji 6.1 Kindergarten
	The China-North Korea Co-Publication working-level talks held in Tumen; Minzu Press, Yanbian People's Press, Heilongjiang Korean Press, Liaoning Minzu Press, and Publication Instruction Office of North Korea participate in the talks; the four Chinese publishers are permitted by the National Press and Publication Administration to publish North Korean children's books in China for Korean-Chinese children
	Jilin Provincial Academic Delegation participates in the International Conference for Specialists on Korean Issues in Pyongyang
	Delegation of NKASS visits YASS
1988	Delegation of NKASS visits YBU, Jilin Yuwen Middle School (alma mater of Kim Il-sung), Jilin Academy of Social Science, and Balhae (Bohai in Chinese) historical sites and participates in a conference
	Delegation of North Korean scientists visit the YBU Departments of Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry, the university library, and laboratory building and participate in a conference
	Delegation of NKASS visits YASS and donates a vernacular Korean version of the Annals of the Joseon Dynasty (<i>Joseon wangjo sillok</i>)

Sources: YALPH (1989), AYKAP (1990).

develop the local culture, intellectuals tried their best to learn from North Korean expertise. Their transnational Koreanness served as a determinant to link Korean Chinese and North Koreans.

Korean-Chinese Merchants and the Development of Cross-Border Trade

In light of the improvement in the relationship between China and North Korea, in the late 1970s Yanbian Koreans began to look forward to meeting their scattered North Korean relatives (Lee 1997, 172).²³ As we can see in Table 3, the improvement in the political relationship was accompanied by improvement in the economic relationship. In the mid-1980s, China and North Korea reopened trade districts near their mutual border and restored cross-border trade. At the same time, the two countries permitted Yanbian Koreans to visit North Korea. These visits not only provided opportunities for family reunions, but also (more importantly) provided the opportunity for private cross-border trade between China and North Korea.

In contrast to the flourishing economy of Yanbian, the situation in North Korea was relatively stagnated. A lack of goods seems to have been a typical economic problem in North Korean cities in the borderlands.²⁴ According to Yeom In-ho's study, shops had few items on their shelves (Yeom 2017, 355). Therefore, the economic (more specifically, in goods and products) asymmetry between the two regions was one of the major determinants of Korean-Chinese cross-border business.

The experience of Mrs. Kim, a citizen of Longjing county, provides us some insight into the process behind visits and trade between the two countries.²⁵ Mrs. Kim started her business in 1986. She had relatives in North Korea's Hoeryeong county, and this allowed her to take part in cross-border trade because Korean Chinese who had relatives in North Korea could be issued a pass by the local North Korean Public Security Bureau.

23. See also Gomà (2006).

24. This section is based on the author's own experiences in the 1980s in addition to an interview with Mrs. Kim.

25. Mrs. Kim, interview by author, Seoul, August 15, 2019. Mrs. Kim is a typical case of cross-border merchant. Though her experience could not explain *all* circumstances and conditions for cross-border trade, the author was able to identify in her account the main characteristics of the relationship between ethnicity and trade between China and North Korea.

People wanting to visit Pyongyang needed a visa. However, cross-border visits and travel for people living near the border (on either side) required neither a passport nor a visa. Mrs. Kim went to Hoeryeong via Sanhe village in Longjing county. Kim's aunt and her family lived in Hoeryeong.

In the early and mid-1980s there were sales points in Yanji West Market selling goods to people doing business with North Korea. These sales points were run by Korean Chinese who knew what North Korea was lacking and what would sell well. Mrs. Kim bought textile products, such as scarves, cotton long johns, sportswear, and processed foods such as mooncakes, candy, sweets, and twisted doughnuts. In addition, she bought food and daily necessities such as rice, oil, and flour. In 1987 and 1988, she bought similar goods at the same place. Other people, often male traders, bought and sold batteries, flashlights, razors, and lighters. There were also people who sold blankets and medicine.²⁶

There was a big square in front of Hoeryeong Station that the locals called Hong Kong Market. Various small commodities were traded in Hong Kong Market. In the case of bulky products, the seller, buyer, and intermediary first met to negotiate. If the negotiation was successful, they went to the houses where goods were stored for trade. At that time, there were also many merchants from outside Hoeryeong.²⁷ Nearby Musan county, which neighbors China's Helong County, also had a Hong Kong Market, similarly located in front of Musan Station. In 1986, there were small buses transporting traders and goods running from Helong Bus Terminal to Nanping Village on the Chinese side of the border (Yeom 2017, 356). In this way, the Hong Kong Market was a place of trade formed or created by Yanbian Korean and North Korean merchants around the railway stations of the major cities in the North Korean borderlands.

In 1986, Mrs. Kim bought 1,000 yuan (approximately US\$290) worth of goods and travelled to North Korea. She stayed in Hoeryeong for thirteen days. At the end of thirteen days she had 3,000 yuan in proceeds, excluding expenses for eating and sleeping, and this money she gave to her relatives.

26. Mrs. Kim, interview by author, Seoul, August 15, 2019.

27. Mrs. Kim, interview by author, Seoul, August 15, 2019.

After returning to China, she brought dried seafood, such as pollock, sea cucumber, octopus, and anchovies. These North Korean goods were popular in China. The Korean-Chinese merchants bought these dried fish and resold them to locals in the market. In 1987, Mrs. Kim bought a washing machine in China with money from her business. The following year she bought a Hitachi color TV in North Korea. These Japanese-made TVs were sold by North Koreans with Korean-Japanese relatives.²⁸ Where the cross-border trade by Korean Chinese was based on ethno-familial networks with North Koreans, the private cross-border trade between North Korea and Japan was formed by North Koreans and Korean Japanese (W. Park 2020c). In 1988, after returning to China, Mrs. Kim bought a refrigerator and a radio cassette player. Thanks to the cross-border trade, her family was able to procure all the major home appliances in the late 1980s, a time when these products were considered by locals to be a sign of wealth and middle-class life.²⁹ In both Helong and Longjing counties, cross-border trade was capable of improving people's standard of living. Most Korean-Chinese traders could earn about three or four months' salary by buying 1,000 yuan worth goods in China and reselling them to North Koreans (Yeom 2017, 357).

In summary, after economic liberalization the Korean-Chinese population was able to pursue diverse economic activities both domestic and international scope. The market in Yanbian needed North Korean products and the North Koreans needed Chinese-made products. The difference in local economic conditions in Yanbian and the surrounding area stimulated Korean-Chinese businesses and the merchants knew that satisfying the demands of both sides would help improve their economic status. The Korean-Chinese merchants' local Koreanness allowed them to enrich the variety of products in the local market and improve their standards of living. Their transnational Koreanness, meanwhile, was key to their ability to engage in cross-border trade. Ethno-familial ties between Korean Chinese and North Koreans played a key role in the economic cross-border relationships between China and North Korea.

28. Mrs. Kim, interview by author, Seoul, August 15, 2019.

29. Mrs. Kim, interview by author, Seoul, August 15, 2019.

Conclusion

From the mid- to late 1970s China's national agenda shifted from class struggle to development. Yanbian Koreans eradicated the far-leftist system and began to pursue various projects for local development.³⁰ This process was intrinsically related to the restoration of Korean ethnicity. Post-socialist domestic politics permitted the local (Chinese) Koreanness of Yanbian Koreans. On the other hand, whilst ethnic ties between Korean Chinese and North Koreans were one of the primary reasons for ideological attacks, these ties were restored through the improvement in Sino-North Korean relations. The meetings between top leaders, the visits of top leaders to Yanbian, and the exchanges between local governments permitted the transnational Koreanness of Yanbian Koreans. In this sense, post-socialist domestic and international politics reset Yanbian Korean's ethnicity to local and transnational Koreanness.

As political elites of the Korean Autonomous Prefecture, the Korean-Chinese cadres tried their best to develop the local economy. They instructed farmers to change the agricultural system, and also led urban residents to repair and construct production facilities. Korean-Chinese intellectuals also tried their best to develop local society and culture. The region's educational institutions were able to reopen with the return of teachers and professors, whilst artists tried to restore and develop Korean-Chinese art. Korean-Chinese merchants promoted active cross-border trade in line with China's open-door policy, contributing to the development of a local commodity economy. For Yanbian Koreans, Yanbian was a self-governing region. So, as an aspect of ethnicity (or identity), local Koreanness was an important determinant for Korean Chinese looking to develop their ethnic hometown.

Local Korean-Chinese cadres also promoted exchanges with North

30. At the same time, in southern China, the regions Shenzhen (Guangdong)-Hong Kong and Fujian-Taiwan emerged at the forefront of economic and social development. However, Hong Kong and Taiwan were advanced economies at that time in contrast to North Korea. These two regions became China's models for economic reform.

Koreans in line with improvements in Sino-North Korean relations. At a time when international exchanges between local governments were not common in China, Korean-Chinese political elites used their now-permitted transnational Koreanness as a resource to establish their leadership in promoting these exchanges. The exchanges between local politicians also enabled exchanges in the domain of economy and industry—and in these exchanges too, Korean Chinese played important roles. Meanwhile, transnational Koreanness also helped Korean-Chinese intellectuals to develop local society and culture; Korean-Chinese artists applied themselves to learning about their culture's art from North Korean artists, and educational institutions in Yanbian introduced North Korean materials to Korean-Chinese students. The university education of Korean language and culture was restored through exchanges between professors. In addition, Korean-Chinese merchants used their ethno-familial ties to promote cross-border trade. So, as the other aspect of ethnicity, transnational Koreanness also served as an important determinant for Yanbian Koreans to develop their home region.

The changes in domestic and international politics simultaneously permitted the restoration of local and transnational Koreanness. These then served as determinants for the socioeconomic transformation of Yanbian.³¹ Thus, one may conclude that the ethnicity of Yanbian Koreans directly influenced the early stages of local development in post-socialist China.

31. The Korean ethnicity of China's Korean-Chinese population was reorganized by the newly established diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in the 1990s. Korean Chinese were a subject of local development, and at the same time served a role as South Korea's foreign workforce. Thus, a historical view of the reorganization of Korean-Chinese ethnicity provides insights into the state-society relationship and the characteristics of the developmental state in Northeast Asia.

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