

*promoting access to White Rose research papers*



**Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York**  
**<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>**

---

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:

<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/76459/>

---

**Paper:**

Cathcart, AJ (2010) *Nationalism and Ethnic Identity in the Sino-Korean Border Region of Yanbian, 1945–1950*. *Korean Studies*, 34. 25 - 53 (28).

---

# Nationalism and Ethnic Identity in the Sino-Korean Border Region of Yanbian, 1945–1950

---

*Adam Cathcart*

This article chronicles the evolution of ethnic politics in the Yanbian region, focusing on the Chinese Korean communist leader Chu Tök-hae during the Chinese civil war and the early Korean War. Chu's advocacy of Chinese nationality for ethnic Koreans is juxtaposed with his cooperation with North Korea, conflict over North Korean refugees, and examinations of the Yanbian region's role between the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The "Resist America and Aid Korea" movement provides the most dramatic example of how Chu and ethnic Koreans in Yanbian expressed a uniquely tinged Chinese nationalism while continuing to lend support to North Korea. The article thereby aims to contribute to the regional history of Northeast Asia, add texture to debates on Chinese and Korean nationalism in that region, and reveal new aspects of Chinese Korean agency in the earliest years of Chinese Communist Party control.

In the immense outpouring of scholarship that examines the Korean experience from 1945 to 1950, the role of Chinese Koreans, or *Chosŏnjok*, in Yanbian during those years has received relatively little attention. The years 1945–1950 were not simply critical for the Korean minority in a China establishing a new and pro-communist framework, they also witnessed a burgeoning of cultural and political ties between Yanbian and the emerging North Korean republic.<sup>1</sup> Yet in those years, Koreans in Manchuria were not only saddled with past participation in the failed experiment of Manchukuo and rejected as collaborators by the Chinese

Nationalist Party (Guomindang), they were often unable to return to ancestral locales on the Korean peninsula. In this situation, Chinese Koreans by necessity looked to unity with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as the Party clambered into the Northeast. Not until the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, however, was the “Korean minority” in China in a position to fully prove its loyalty to the new Chinese state. Examination of Chinese Koreans in the period just following the Japanese surrender indicates new aspects of identity politics and ethnic nationalism and reveals the unique role played by Chinese Koreans as local agents of contact with North Korea along a highly significant wartime frontier. What influence did Chinese Koreans have on the North Korean revolution and the North Korean war effort? What aspects of connectivity between China and the North Korean nascent regime emanated from Yanbian? To answer these questions is to shed new light on the dynamics among Koreans of various citizenship in the period just after 1945.

One of the most important Chinese Koreans in this period was the Chinese Communist Party administrator Chu Tök-hae (Zhu Dehai 朱德海). Chu played a crucial role in consolidating communist power and promoting a Korean-tinged nationalism in Yanbian. He engaged in multiple areas of cooperation with neighboring North Korea; his merits as an internationalist for China and as an advocate for Chinese Koreans have gone unnoticed in most of the English-language literature.<sup>2</sup> After a brief examination of North Korean immigrants who saw Yanbian as an illegal gateway to opportunity in China, the essay concludes with an exposition of Chinese Korean participation in the early war effort for the “War to Resist America and Aid Korea.” The article’s geographical focus is Yŏnbyŏn (Yanbian), the large cluster of counties on the eastern edge of Jilin province. Today, this area is particularly consequential as the site of the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region (Yanbian Chaoxianzu Zizhizhou), a locus of cooperation with North Korea and the home of about half of the entire Korean population in the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

What happened in the Sino-Korean borderland from 1945 to 1950, and the role played by China’s Korean minority in those events, remains largely an untold story. To be sure, scholars have deftly intertwined the Chinese civil war and the Korean War through research on the military/operational impact of some fifty thousand Koreans who returned to join the Korean People’s Army in 1950.<sup>3</sup> However, the overall role of the Yanbian region or the view of Chinese Koreans as regional players in their own right has been lacking. Foundational monographs on the Chinese civil war eschew local treatments of the Korean frontier and do not

venture into in-depth studies of Yanbian.<sup>4</sup> Studies of the Korean minority tend to be constructed in much broader temporal terms, often covering a century or two, and pass over the war years in fleeting fashion.<sup>5</sup> More recent critical studies of Koreans in Manchuria are immensely informative, yet remain confined to colonial experiences.<sup>6</sup> Work by the prolific Chae-Jin Lee serves as a vital cornerstone for the present research, but even Lee's work skirts Chu Tök-hae and the new documents, analyzed here for the first time, from the PRC Foreign Ministry Archives in Beijing.<sup>7</sup> Scholars working in Chinese, particularly those based at Yanbian University, naturally have focused on the issue of Chinese nationality for the Korean minority most extensively. Their access to historical sources, and bilingual command of those sources, is unparalleled by any Western scholar, but their works remain hamstrung by Chinese Communist Party orthodoxies, meaning that narratives of anti-Japanese resistance and flawless ethnic cooperation tend to dominate.<sup>8</sup> While Charles Armstrong's monograph mentions Yanbian at multiple points and highlights events in North Hamgyōng province, at no point in discussing the milieu after 1945 does his work pierce the northern frontier or analyze events in Yanbian as they inflected the North Korean revolution in more than a passing way.<sup>9</sup>

Of the works dealing with ethnic Koreans from 1945 to 1950, official CCP biographies of major local cadre such as Chu Tök-hae, if somewhat hagiographical, add much to the known narrative of Yanbian and the Korean population in the Northeast.<sup>10</sup> The Yanbian archive remains closed to foreigners for the time being, but published digests of the archive's holdings, especially those issued in the liberal 1980s, provide an excellent point of departure.<sup>11</sup> As a forerunner for relatively open access, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive of the PRC in Beijing contains hundreds of detailed documents dealing with Northeast China and the Sino-Korean relationship from 1949 to 1958.<sup>12</sup> These documents are inclusive of the problem of allegiance and nationality among ethnic Koreans in the Northeast and deal also with the issue of prewar and wartime refugees from North Korea into the Chinese borderlands. Used in combination with local histories and newspapers, the Foreign Ministry Archive aids in revising and augmenting the necessary historical groundwork for future examinations of the Korean minority in China, and Yanbian in particular, during the Korean War. It is a final aim of the article to further establish the role of lesser-known individuals, from provincial cadre to illegal immigrants, to illustrate the many linkages between Yanbian and North Korea, illustrating previously unknown aspects of North Korean relations with China in the era of state construction and mobilization for national defense.<sup>13</sup>

## Colonial Legacies: Continuities and Destruction

The issue of national identity of ethnic Koreans in the regions north of the Tumen River is, like most things involving Manchuria, in dispute. Koreans settled in the region as early as the Han dynasty, and with the recession of Chinese power south of the Great Wall in the third century A.D., Koguryō rule flourished in the region. Even when the Chinese armies of Sui Yangdi and subsequently the Tang swept toward the Korean peninsula, they never approached the Tumen River, leaving Yanbian as an area of indeterminate status in the aftermath of Korea's unification wars in the seventh century. With the arrival of successive conquest dynasties of Liao, Jin, and Yuan, the clusters of Koreans in Manchuria were subordinated to the ruling northern dynasties. The later years of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910) brought bilateral negotiations with the Qing and the relatively definitive establishment of the Tumen River as a Sino-Korean border.<sup>14</sup> As the Qing lurched toward the realization that Manchuria was vulnerable in the 1880s, crop yields plunged in neighboring North Hamgyŏng province, and Korean migration to Manchuria accelerated. With the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910 and the extension of the nominal Chinese Republic to the Northeast in 1912, issues of nationality, nationalism, and law began to lash themselves to the Koreans with new vigor and tendentiousness. Migration to Manchuria accelerated rapidly in this period. Koreans came to Yanbian/Kando for many reasons: some came to escape bad debts, others to flee Japanese police, and many more came for the cheap land offered by both Japanese and Chinese companies.<sup>15</sup> The creation of Manchukuo in 1932, paradoxically, finally offered the possibility of citizenship to these Koreans in Manchuria. Only a handful came to make revolution, but Japanese repression created more than a few revolutionaries.

By 1932, more than one million Koreans were resident in Manchuria, and virtually all were Japanese subjects. Their association with Japan, enhanced by the establishment of Japanese consulates in areas they tended to inhabit, thereby made the Koreans the target of Chinese nationalistic excesses. The Nanking government and its ruling Nationalist Party/Guomindang did little to mitigate local outbreaks of anti-Korean sentiment. Chinese often perceived Korean complicity in the creation and sustenance of Japan's Manchukuo, where the Koreans were among the "Five Great Ethnic Groups," added to the Chinese stereotype of Koreans as opportunists (or, in the case of Kim Il Sung, bandits). The anti-Korean trend of the early 1930s was reinforced by the CCP, whose rhetorical accord with Lenin's theories of harmony with the nationalities fell victim

to Stalinist paranoia. Thousands of Korean communists were killed or exposed to the Japanese police in the bloody months of the “Minsaengdan Incident,” an inner-Party purge centered in Yanbian that eviscerated the CCP in areas where nearly 90 percent of cadre had been ethnic Koreans.<sup>16</sup> This breach in the Chinese-Korean leftist front would leave deep and lasting scars in the Yanbian area.

As the Pacific War progressed, Korean conscription by Japan increased and collaborationist Koreans were sent to, and recruited from within, Manchuria to hunt down bandits. Some Korean members of the CCP in Yanbian were arrested and subsequently urged into the ranks of the very Japanese security forces they had once attacked, with tragic results. Close governmental cooperation between Manchukuo and the Korean administration in Seoul (all occurring under the auspices of a Greater East Asia Ministry in Tokyo) accelerated such assimilation, and Japanese companies like the South Manchurian Railway actively moved Korean migrants in and out of Manchuria and Yanbian. Koreans farmed in defensible rural communities, where they remained as Japanese subjects until Red Army parachutes blossomed out of the sky, signaling the destruction of Manchukuo, in 1945.

## Liberation

The arrival of Soviet troops in militarily vulnerable Hunchun, the easternmost of Yanbian’s counties, in August 1945 augured great changes for Koreans across the region. The subsequent Soviet interlude in Yanbian was brief but consequential. Problems with Soviet looting and rape of Japanese, as in other areas of Northeast China and Korea, were unsettling, but the Soviets primarily left the Koreans to their own affairs and encouraged peasant attacks on landlords. (Little machinery existed in the region for the Red Army to loot, in contrast to the industrially rich urban hubs in Liaoning province.) From their arrival in Yanbian in late August 1945, the Soviets inspired an ambivalent response from the ethnic Koreans, as seen in Yanji, where about one thousand people turned out for an all-city “rally of thanks” on August 22. Interestingly, the authors of Red Army documents in Yanbian drew clear distinctions between ethnic Koreans (to whom they referred simply as “Koreans”) and Han (“Chinese”). At the rally, an unnamed Korean school teacher gave a speech whose tact paid little heed to any conception of a Chinese nation-state. “The reason that the Soviet Red Army comes here,” he noted, “is not to occupy our land, but to liberate Manchuria (*Manzhouli*) and the Korean people.”<sup>17</sup>

To whom the liberated land would be handed over, however, was not indicated.

Destroying pillars of Japanese rule in small cities and Korean-majority areas of the countryside was a crucial aspect of CCP legitimacy in the struggle for eastern Manchuria, and one the Party tried but failed to totally achieve before the spring planting of 1946. Hundreds if not thousands of collaborationist Koreans were caught up in the “oppose traitors to the Han, clear the accounts” movements that swept across Eastern Jilin in spring 1946. For the biggest offenders (most often landlords or infamous members of security forces), judgments were rendered at mass meetings, often followed by a quick execution. Under these conditions, allegiances among ethnic Koreans changed rapidly. In Antu, the interior gateway along the Chinese Eastern Railway into Yanbian, a local power broker named Bi Shuwen is a good case in point. Bi had been known for collaborating with Japanese, but after his Kwantung Army sponsors capitulated, he went over to the CCP. Using his new position, he then proceeded to surrender the city of Antu and its crucial railroad to the incoming Nationalists, yet again maintaining his power as a local official. In March 1946, however, he fled the city and went into hiding when the CCP returned; he managed to survive the worst years of the civil war, but was ultimately captured and tried in 1949.

Events in Antu were replicated in other areas of eastern Jilin province. In the industrial center Tonghua, big public trials were held for Korean collaborators with the Japanese on April 21, 1946. And at Longjing (a bustling county outside of Yanji), the CCP pushed public trials of the “traitors” at the end of April 1946.<sup>18</sup> Well after the CCP had established control of the region, judicial proceedings against collaborators continued to crop up periodically. While he was in Moscow in January 1950, new PRC Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai (周恩来) was confronted with the need to dispense advice to cadre in the Yanbian region as to how to deal with trials of Korean collaborators in the region.<sup>19</sup> The communist revolutions in North Korea and Manchuria occurred with some rapidity, but in dealing with collaborators and national identity, they were hardly immediately complete.

The rush of the Japanese to disembark left multiple properties and assets in limbo, resulting in factional and self-interested behavior by Koreans and Han Chinese, who alike were fighting over the Japanese leavings.<sup>20</sup> Attacks on Japanese settlers, Chinese landlords, and pro-Japanese Koreans were rapid indeed in 1945. Killing landlords and participating in public struggle meetings was, as in other parts of China, an important means

not just of overthrowing the old order, but in asserting an anti-Japanese, anti-Manchukuo identity in Yanbian.

The exodus of most of the Japanese army, along with vociferous attacks on local collaborationist landlords, led to the proliferation of bandit groups in the hills and mountains of the Yanbian region. Yanbian, and eastern Manchuria more broadly, was rife with various independent patriotic Korean militia whose return to Korea was prevented by apprehensive Soviet border guards. Some of these groups took to serious clashes with Japanese remnants. The most notable battle occurred in southern Jilin province on February 3, 1946, near the city of Tonghua, where newly formed independent ethnic Korean armies numbering in the thousands fought with remnant Japanese soldiers. The scale of the battle, along with parallel violence springing up in nearby Yanbian counties, indicates that the settling of colonial-era disputes over loyalties and issues of identity would not be regarded as immediate.<sup>21</sup>

While violence involving Koreans within Manchuria was conspicuous, migration to the Korean peninsula was less prevalent. Of the 1.4 million Koreans who had inhabited the Northeast in August 1945, fewer than one third returned to Korea.<sup>22</sup> Migration to Korea was not encouraged by the Soviets, and news of Soviet atrocities north of the 38th parallel, along with rumors of chaotic American rule in South Korea, dampened enthusiasm for Korea as a magnet for return immigration. But reasons existed to move. In early September 1945, Soviet soldiers killed nine Koreans near an elementary school in an incident in Yanbian, stimulating a brief but intense opposition.<sup>23</sup> Stories of a Soviet suppression of a student revolt in the border city of Sinŭiju, however, indicated that North Korea was hardly a better destination: on November 25, 1945, the Red Army had killed dozens and arrested more than seven hundred Koreans in putting down a student-led insurrection just across the river from China.<sup>24</sup> Lacking the advocacy of a powerful unified Korean government, the vast majority of Koreans in Manchuria elected to remain stationary.

The arrival of the Guomindang in Yanbian in spring 1946 represented a new pressure whose impact for Koreans was characterized by almost unanimous negativity. Although the Koreans felt they had achieved a heightened status by having fought the Japanese as part of the liberation campaign in 1945, the Nationalists turned against the Koreans, labeling them as collaborators.<sup>25</sup> Although the Guomindang had cooperated with Koreans in Chongqing during the war and had supported Korean independence, such concerns did not mitigate the counterproductive



fashion in which the Guomindang approached the ethnic Koreans in the Northeast.<sup>26</sup> Han-Korean tensions were intense, and the Guomindang did little but enflame such passions in the areas under their control. Some Han called the Koreans “secondary devils” (*er guizi* 二鬼子), a goading reference to their perceived closeness to, and inferiority to, the “Japanese devils” (*Riben guizi* 日本鬼子). The anti-Korean violence by Han Chinese did not reach Yanbian with great force, owing to the numerical superiority of ethnic Koreans, but refugees from the heart of Jilin province arrived in Yanji laden with stories of violence by angry Han. An investigative delegation dispatched by the Korean Provisional Government based in Shanghai estimated that 75 Koreans had been killed and 237 injured in Changchun in 1946. By tolerating this violence and treating all Koreans as aliens within China, even forcing several thousand Koreans in Liaoning province into concentration camps for repatriation, the Guomindang lost its chance of gaining the support of the ethnic Koreans.<sup>27</sup> Other Koreans were concentrating in Harbin for safety, coinciding with the CCP’s urban goals, and moving toward the relative calm of Yanbian.<sup>28</sup> When the Guomindang made clear in 1946 that it viewed all Koreans in Manchuria as aliens who should, eventually, be deported, even though the policy was later rescinded, the action left little room for pro-Nanking sentiment among Koreans.

The CCP moved to regain the sympathies of ethnic Koreans in Yanbian by tolerating and promoting the renaissance of Korean language and culture and by pushing the standard platform of social reforms appealing to peasants. Some 90 percent of Koreans in Yanbian were farmers to whom the CCP policy of land redistribution clearly appealed, particularly when juxtaposed against the confiscatory bent of the returning Guomindang. Korean Workers’ Party propaganda from across the border was another general means of reinforcing the perceived effectiveness of communist governance.<sup>29</sup> With the withdrawal of Soviet soldiers out of Yanbian and into North Korea in spring 1946, the Guomindang struggled briefly for control in the region. The Guomindang lasted longest in Hunchun but finally submitted to CCP power in 1947, and Yanbian thereafter became a solidly communist area. However, the extent to which it was a solidly *Chinese* area was still in question. The process of joining the Chinese nation would be a particularly difficult one for ethnic Koreans in Northeast China.<sup>30</sup>

The establishment of CCP administration in Yanbian required the participation of a new type of postwar leader: the Chinese Communist ethnic Korean. The men of this pattern who emerged were committed internationalists who consistently promoted intercourse with North Korea,

but they used their ties with North Korea to enmesh themselves further in the Chinese project of nation-building. These local leaders in Yanbian would solicit support from North Korea prior to 1950, and they would also serve a vital role for the central government in Beijing in rendering aid to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) during the Korean War. It is to the most significant of those local leaders, Chu Tök-hae, that we now turn.

### **Chu Tök-hae and the Construction of Chinese Korean Identity in Yanbian**

The year 1948 was a triumphant one for Korean communists. The Soviet occupation of North Korea was coming to an end, and an independent nation, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, would emerge in September. More than fifty thousand Korean troops fighting on the battlefield of the Chinese civil war in Manchuria were turning the tide. The year witnessed successive losses by Guomindang armies in the Liao-Shen battles in Manchuria, making irrevocably clear that, short of full-scale U.S. intervention, that region would finally become an unassailable communist base. The creation of a Chinese communist republic—as distinct from the nation-less guerilla bases or “liberated areas” from which Mao Zedong and other communists had plied their ideology in Manchuria—would become a reality. Within this victorious and unprecedented context, an ethnic Korean, Chu Tök-hae, was selected by the CCP hierarchy to become the first regional secretary of Yanbian.

Chu was an ideal candidate for the job. Born in the Russian Far East in 1911, he had moved to Helong (a small city near Yanji) in 1920 and came of age with the revolution, joining the Communist Youth League in 1930 and the Party the next year. After participation in the Northeast United Anti-Japanese Army, he went to Moscow for three years and finally spent 1939–1945 in the northwest base of Yan'an, where he forged relationships with the top CCP leaders. In autumn 1945, Chu had raced headlong to Manchuria with about twenty thousand other cadre, led by CCP Central Committee member Chen Yun (陈云), to stake the Party's claim to the region. Chu's mission was to oversee work with the ethnic Koreans, a population whose anger at the spurning Guomindang did not necessarily equate with unequivocal embrace of the CCP.<sup>31</sup> Chu Tök-hae had arrived in Yanji with nineteen cadre on November 11, 1945, and, a week later, joined Chen Yun in Harbin, where he intended to organize gathering numbers of Koreans into militia forces.<sup>32</sup> In Harbin, Chu

engaged in what must have been a manic twenty-four hours of activity, as he was almost immediately asked by the Soviet occupation forces to leave the city. The Soviets were not interested in facilitating the establishment, let alone the arming or the training, of Korean groups not directly under Soviet control. Chu, however, departed Harbin with about six hundred Korean militiamen who would form the kernel of CCP forces in the Yanbian region. From November 1945 to August 1948, Chu moved among the cities and hamlets of eastern Jilin, engaging in “anti-bandit” activities against holdout Guomindang forces and recalcitrant landlords. He also moved to shore up support for the revolution among the vast majority of rural Koreans, agitating within the Party for attention to Korean issues. One significant means of guiding Koreans to the CCP was via propaganda and the arts, areas in which Chu had particular interest and many close friends.<sup>33</sup> Artistic activities among Koreans were a potent and prevalent means of justifying the seizure of political power from departing Japanese as well as the incoming Guomindang.

As the civil war in Manchuria neared its conclusion in the frigid spring of 1948, the CCP sought to refine and justify its stance toward the Korean minority from the standpoint of theory. For this purpose, the Party convened meetings in Jilin city in February 1948. Chu Tök-hae participated actively, justifying the inclusion of Koreans as a minority (*shaoshuminzu* 少数民族) deserving of Chinese nationality, continually returning in his remarks to the role of Koreans in the anti-Japanese guerrilla resistance in Manchuria as justification. (Chu wisely failed to mention that this resistance also served as the taproot of the North Korean revolution.) Seemingly ignoring his history lessons, those convened in Jilin floated several theories under which the issue of the nationality of Koreans in China could be resolved. The idea of a “Theory of Multi-Nationality” for Koreans was advanced, but Chu found it unacceptable. His attitude was likewise hostile toward the “Three-Nationality Theory,” an idea that held that Koreans in Manchuria had “The Soviet Union as Proletarian Motherland, Korea as a Racial Motherland, and China as the Motherland of Liberation.” To Chu’s point of view, such a strata was far better than Koreans being considered aliens in China altogether, but hardly a tenable classification.<sup>34</sup> In their attempts to align Koreans with three different revolutions, Chu’s communist colleagues were in fact replicating the old colonial problem of divided loyalties, but draping the issue with proletarian garb. To his credit, Chu’s emphatic support for unequivocal Chinese nationality for Koreans in the Northeast would eventually place him squarely in the mainstream of CCP policy. While working within this framework, however, Chu

would receive aid from North Korea and embrace the possibility of North Korean influence in Yanbian.

In August 1948, on the cusp of Shenyang's liberation, Chu took the long trip south from Harbin in order to liaise with the Shenyang Ethnic Minorities Affairs Office. Here Chu was again charged with the responsibility of stabilizing the Yanbian region. Somewhat surprisingly, his superiors implied that many of the difficulties in the region actually stemmed from wartime collaboration among Koreans in the region formerly known as Jiandao. Chu was given this message in the form of a mandate of "suppressing any recurrence of Japanese imperialism."<sup>35</sup> Paranoia about backsliding into capitalism and pro-Americanism was indeed prevalent among CCP leaders in 1948, and anti-Japanese movements that had raged among students in Guomindang-controlled cities lent emphasis to their recommendations. More locally, the fact that large numbers of Japanese migrants (*Ri qiao* 日侨) remained in Manchuria, including in Yanbian, and the lingering suspicion that a plurality of the Koreans was functionally fluent in Japanese may have added to the otherwise odd emphasis of the Shenyang leaders to Chu to prevent a Japanese revival in his region. While anti-Japanese rhetoric had a prominent place in North Korean rhetoric, rarely if ever did leaders in Pyongyang express anxiety about a pro-Japanese revival north of the 38th parallel.<sup>36</sup>

In the autumn of 1949, Chu went to Beijing and subsequently participated in festivities inaugurating the PRC. More importantly, Chu took part in meetings on the minority question in the Chinese leadership compound of Zhongnanhai, where he exchanged views with Zhu De (朱德), Liu Shaoqi (刘少奇), and other members of the Party elite.<sup>37</sup> In Beijing, it is likely that Chu reunited with PRC Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai, whom he had first met in Yan'an, forming a bond that would last until, but not through, the Cultural Revolution. Chu Tök-hae's appearance in Beijing in September 1949 also signals the importance that the Central Committee of the CCP accorded to the Yanbian region. Chu, after all, was merely in charge of a handful of big counties on the eastern periphery of Jilin province and reported primarily to the administrative center of that province in Changchun and its chairman, Zhou Baozhong. In addition to Chu Tök-hae's own connections (*guanxi*), it may have been due to Zhou Baozhong's patronage that Chu was invited to Beijing for the meetings. As a veteran head of Manchuria's most legitimated anti-Japanese movement in the 1930s and long-standing friend of Kim Il Sung, Zhou Baozhong possessed an impressive range of contacts in the North Korean Worker's Party.<sup>38</sup> But the meetings in Beijing in preparation for the founding of the PRC were focused less on

international friends than on forging a consensus among China's various minority groups. In Chu Tök-hae's case, the de facto Korean autonomous region over which he presided was one of the earliest areas of CCP control and, moreover, was a welcome conduit to China's emerging North Korean ally. However, few could have anticipated that that young ally would lead China into a war during which the area under Chu's administration would be deeply tested.

After attending the ceremonies accompanying the declaration of the People's Republic in Beijing, Chu Tök-hae returned on October 16, 1949, to a song-filled welcome at the Yanji train station by arts troupes. Two female Yanbian University students adorned his path by throwing flower petals. He gave a speech immediately upon arrival, mounting a stage to state that "China's revolution has shaken the entire world (震动了整个世界) but is also the affair of 475 million Chinese people who are themselves people of the world." This emphasis on socialist internationalism was a shrewd means of aligning Yanbian residents not just with the achievements of the Chinese revolution alone.<sup>39</sup> In fact, Chu's remarks mirror those of North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Hōnyōng, whose expression of excitement at the PRC's victorious founding also placed the CCP's achievement in its global context.<sup>40</sup>

Whatever its intended emphasis, Chu's soaring rhetoric could not mask the difficulties of the task he was shouldering. Yanbian had been left in a difficult condition by the Japanese, whose economic approach to the region had emphasized paddy farming, not industrial development. The Soviet occupation, and then the Chinese civil war, had further torn the region away from a functional Korean economy and markets in Japan. Economic ties to the provincial centers to its west, formerly the core of what Steven Levine has called the "wealthy, urbanized Northeast," were shattered.<sup>41</sup> Although Chu Tök-hae had praised General Lin Biao and the People's Liberation Army for their "peaceful liberation of Changchun," the long siege of the city comprising the administrative and economic heart of Jilin province had been devastating to the Yanbian economy. It is rather likely that in late 1948, an honest assessment from Chu would have agreed with subsequent Chinese scholars of the Northeast who called Changchun "a dead city" in that year.<sup>42</sup> The sporadic revival of the Changchun city economy began only in late 1948 and was hampered by Northeast People's Government Chairman Gao Gang's (高岗) need to direct exports to the U.S.S.R., making cross-border trade with North Koreans all the more necessary for daily necessities in Yanbian. However, large-scale economic exchange with the neighboring Korean province of North Hamgyōng was not possible, as that mountainous and arid region

was marginalized even within the North Korean economy. (Yanbian's economically peripheral status contrasts markedly with the relatively prosperous trade going on in the lower Yalu valley between Sinŭiju and its Chinese twin city of Andong.) The economy in 1949 in Yanbian was therefore very poor. Paper factories existed in Kaishantun, and a coal factory was still working in Tianbaoshan, but other than that, as Chu recalled, the area was "blank as a sheet of paper."<sup>43</sup>

Blank paper may have been a fitting metaphor also for the area of education. As in neighboring North Korea, materials for teachers were lacking, salaries for educators were low, and compromises accordingly had to be made. In such circumstances, past experience of Japanese modes of education was not a significant barrier, while cross-border aid from North Korea was eagerly welcomed. Chu recruited a team of experts who were graduates of Japanese universities or, as in the case of the cultivated Gao Yongyi (高永艺), universities in old Manchukuo.<sup>44</sup> Gao was trained at the Xinjing Teacher's College in Changchun (新京师道大学, to which the obligatory prefix 伪 for "puppet" is now attached by the PRC) and remains active today as a historian of the Korean minority. Chu Tök-hae's chosen head of education, Liang Feng (梁凤), was also a graduate of a Japanese university. Chu and Liang together succeeded in setting up a high school in early 1950, with Cui Cai (崔蔡) as vice-principal. After establishing the high school, ethnic Koreans finally had a full complement of schools in which to enroll.<sup>45</sup>

But having satisfied the Koreans, Chu Tök-hae was then set upon with criticism from dissatisfied Han Chinese, showing the tension between accommodation for ethnic Koreans and Han sensitivities. Han parents and students complained of the lack of Chinese-language schools in the area, further noting that existing Chinese schools were taught at a very low level of linguistic proficiency. Chu Tök-hae in response procured money and books and opened a high school for Han students, importing teachers who had graduated from schools in southern China. However, these teachers quickly became dissatisfied with the conditions in Yanbian, as the area was geographically isolated and living standards low. Culturally, many of the new teachers bridled at being isolated among and surrounded by Koreans in harsh winter conditions. Unable to raise salaries, Chu Tök-hae obtained more fish, meat, and more expansive grain rations for the teachers, but having satisfied these Han teachers, Chu may have again increased resentment among the Koreans, who wondered why they were, as the local majority, eating less than the Han migrants.<sup>46</sup> The balancing act that Chu undertook with regard to various necessities in peacetime indicates that ethnic tensions in Yanbian might well have

been more problematic than Chinese and Korean propaganda would have outsiders believe.

Because Yanbian shared a 230-kilometer border with the Soviet Union and a 520-kilometer border with North Korea, Chu Tök-hae often had to deal with matters of international import. In spring 1950, fires broke out near Hunchun along Yanbian's border with the sparsely populated Soviet Far East, raising the question if Yanbian residents could cross the border to fight the fires. In such instances, Chu necessarily sought the counsel of the Foreign Ministry in Beijing.<sup>47</sup> Chu returned to Yanbian from Hunchun to find that fires had also broken out in the area around Changbaishan, the huge and poorly demarcated mountain well known to Koreans as Paektu-san and as the mythical origin of Tangun and the Korean race.<sup>48</sup> North Korean officials suggested that China was responsible for the fires, and Chu apologized, going the next day to the mountain with Korean comrades. Taking a jeep over the Tumen River, they drove upon a heavily wooded road that had been carved out of the pines by Japanese militia in the service of anti-guerrilla suppression. Here Chu Tök-hae and his North Korean colleagues jointly decided that the old trees in the area were in fact "the offices of Guomindang agents and Syngman Rhee traitors." That is to say, they decided to clear-cut the trees in order to prevent the fire from spreading.<sup>49</sup>

While the North Koreans were occasionally difficult neighbors, in other ways their new Democratic People's Republic, far closer than chaotic Beijing, was a proximate model for communists in Yanbian. Fascination with Pyongyang was particularly evident at Yanbian University, an institution that emerged as a foremost conduit for cultural exchanges with North Korea prior to 1950.<sup>50</sup> From July 20 to August 10, 1949, Lin Minqiao (林民乔), one of Chu's top aides, led a delegation to Kim Il Sung University in Pyongyang, an institution referred to by Yanbian cadre variously as "Korea's top university" and "Kim U." (金大).<sup>51</sup> Lin Minqiao's return report explicitly stated that the North Korean experience in university-building should be closely studied, to the extent that even the slogans should be copied. Lin praised the Pyongyang university as "a leading, comprehensive newly constructed socialist university," not forgetting to add: "Study from them, and study from the Soviet Union."<sup>52</sup> Twenty years later, Red Guard investigations of Lin's 1949 trip would conclude that his sojourn to Pyongyang resulted in harmful "North Korean cultural influence entering Yanbian University." To a certain extent, the charge was obvious: Yanbian University thereafter imitated the organization of Kim Il Sung University by setting up four science departments with twelve classes, and consequently it took

four rather than three years to graduate. Guest professors were brought from Pyongyang, and course offerings included “History of Struggle of the Korean Ethnicity in the War of Liberation,” “Korean History,” “History of Korean Literature,” and “Selections from Korean Documents.” Although their later accusations may have been groundless, Chinese Red Guards asserted that students at Yanbian University in the 1950s sang “Song of General Kim Il Sung” and were said even to bow to his portrait, as well as that of Chairman Mao, in the classroom.<sup>53</sup> The case of Yanbian University points to the problems of national identity and dual nationalism that were ushered in by the postwar era, the division of the Koreas, and the upswing of patriotism in the Korean War.

### Trans-Border Population Flows

Academic exchanges with North Korea added tangibly to Yanbian’s cultural capital, but not all cross-border exchanges were so formal or so positive. Seeking opportunities outside of North Korea for reasons that ranged from the political to the economic, Koreans illegally crossed the Tumen River into Yanbian and moved into China proper. North Korean immigrants who entered China through Yanbian often turned up in other places and caused problems, making the region a troublesome gateway. One report by an official in the distant Qingdao city administration, Wang Shaoluo (王绍洛), dating from May 1950, explained the issue:

In investigating Qingdao after liberation, [we] often found North Korean sailors and immigrants who had come to live in this city. One sailor and crew in particular have been a problem for our People’s Government courts. Most recently North Koreans have appeared freely coming in from the borders of the Northeast and moving to Qingdao. The Korean immigrants rarely tally with procedures: instead our government has to resolve their conflicts expressly through disciplinary action.<sup>54</sup>

Wang located the source of his problem in the border cities of Andong (Dandong) and Yanji, asserting that neither municipality was living up to its responsibility to regulate the flow of Koreans into China. “Immigrants from all areas of the Northeast are staying in Andong, but especially Korean immigrants, who are staying in the city for a long time,” he noted. Wang continued his criticism of the Andong office for not doing its job in preparing documents for those Koreans who go to Qingdao, as those people needed but did not possess a proper citizen certification (*ju min zheng* 据民证). Highlighting the slippery nature of



labeling Koreans with a nationality, immigration officers in Yanji were criticized by Wang for promoting confusion between Korean nationality and Korean ethnicity through indiscriminate use of the terms *minzu/minjok* (民族) and *Chaoxian/Chosun* (朝鮮). Officials in Yanji, in other words, had a nuanced view of which terms applied under what conditions, but from the Qingdao perspective, all of the Koreans arriving in China should have been categorized immediately as Korean nationals and appropriately restricted. Wang's frustrated missive to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs found a final target of wrongdoing in Tumen, the small city abutting the Tumen River and the border with North Korea at the eastern edge of Yanbian.

Wang gave several examples of law-breaking Koreans in his municipality. One North Korean migrant from near Tumen, Wang wrote, "came to Qingdao by stealth (潜行来青), reclaiming and then selling used clothing and engaging in other illegal activities." As if this unsanctioned commercial activity were not vexing enough, Wang concluded his memorandum with a complaint couched within a rhetorical question: "Doesn't it seem that immigrants from Northeastern counties are failing to follow our procedures for foreigners moving around the country" (东北县侨民是否应按外侨手续旅行)?"<sup>55</sup> Small capitalists were spilling out of Korea, through Yanbian, and into China, replicating the troubling trends of the 1930s. Moreover, the alleged laxness of Yanbian border officials toward their North Korean counterparts indicated the limits of toleration.

North Korean refugees were also committing crimes in northeastern provinces closer to the border. The Bureau of Foreign Affairs (Waishiju) of the Shenyang Police Department, on July 13, 1950, reported on a twenty-four-year-old North Korean who, under the guise of studying at an unnamed local university, had committed crimes in the city. Another North Korean national also in his twenties was moving between Harbin and Dalian to commit crimes; on July 25, 1950, he was apprehended. Harbin was rife with foreigners who required surveillance, and Korean nationals often were caught up in the net. The potential association of Koreans with criminal elements among the Japanese population in cities like Changchun was also noted by CCP investigators. Case files and court decisions (刑事判决) on Koreans in China indicate that not just young Koreans were prosecuted throughout 1950; men and women ranging from their thirties to their fifties also figured into court decisions. Border cities like Tonghua, with majority populations of ethnic Koreans, were hotspots for court cases for renegades.<sup>56</sup> Two of the crimes described above occurred in the days after the Korean War broke out in June 1950, indicating that whatever the propaganda line of North Korean

friendship being intoned in Beijing, for local police in Northeast China, North Koreans who moved among their Chinese counterparts potentially represented a locus for trouble. Insofar as Yanji was the gateway for much of this activity, the problem merits further investigation, as does Chu Tök-hae's attitude toward immigration from North Korea. Although Koreans had largely been able to shed the stigma of association with Manchukuo, and further aided the CCP in recovery of the Northeast and the campaigns for Hainan island, doubts still remained about issues of belonging and loyalty. These would be most deeply tested in the singular event of the early PRC, the Korean War.

### **The Korean War in Yanbian**

China's intervention in the Korean War elicited powerful manifestations of nationalism in Northeast China which coincided with the emergence of the PRC as a state.<sup>57</sup> Chinese Koreans in the Yanbian region were far from immune to these trends and indeed were among the most ardent supporters of the communist war effort in vast Northeast China after June 25, 1950. However, the war—which began as a Korean civil war—raised at least three difficult questions for the Chinese Koreans. The first related to the upswing in anti-South Korea propaganda: CCP media consistently indicated that there were two separate types of Koreans encompassing “good” communists and “traitorous puppets” who yet adhered to proto-fascist ideologies in South Korea.<sup>58</sup> When anti-rightist movements broke out in Yanbian and nationwide in 1951, it became clear that traitorous Koreans, from the CCP point of view, did not reside in South Korea alone. The second difficult question raised by the war came along with North Korean victories in June–September 1950. These battlefield successes south of the 38th parallel and the incipient unification of Korea elicited conflicting impulses among Chinese Koreans—on the one hand, they were proud of North Korean victories, even possessive about them, but on the other hand, as China prepared for war, Chinese Koreans had to reaffirm that Yanbian was wholly Chinese and that they were foremost good citizens of the PRC and loyal to Chairman Mao. The third difficult question in 1950 related to the possibility of the North Korean state simply evaporating and the very tangible problem of North Korean refugees trickling and then flowing into Yanbian. All of these factors added to the pressures on Yanbian's Korean residents to declare overtly and often their wholehearted allegiance to the People's Republic of China foremost.

On June 30, 1950, pro-North Korean themes were prevalent in the

city of Yanji. An estimated ten thousand participants gathered, not so much to protest American action in Taiwan, but to celebrate the liberation of Seoul by the Korean People's Army. While most of China had only received news of the war on June 28, 1950, and were tentative in organizing street activities, Yanji city had rapidly organized a rally.<sup>59</sup> The Yanji organizers evidenced little of the confusion voiced by Foreign Ministry bureaucrats in Beijing who, having been snubbed by Kim Il Sung in terms of forewarning of his invasion, were reluctant to combine celebrations of North Korean success with "opposing the U.S. invasion mobilization activities of Taiwan".<sup>60</sup> In Yanbian, the progress of the Korean People's Army would be highlighted at every turn, and pro-North Korean propaganda in the Northeast was thereafter quite prevalent in the Yanbian news media from July to September, 1950. While Beijing's Xinhua News Agency remained the source of most of the information published in Yanbian's major Korean-language newspaper, *Dongbei Chaoxian Renmin Ribao* (Northeast Korean People's Daily), items originating from North Korea tended to be placed more prominently in Yanbian than in Beijing papers, while local reports (e.g., 本报报告 *benbao baogao*) tended also to focus on ties to the North. Statements by North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Hŏnyŏng were frequently printed in Yanbian newspapers, articles that denounced American aggression and stoked confidence among Yanbian Koreans of the justice of the North Korean cause. Glorification of Kim Il Sung and the Korean People's Army, another sometime theme of the mainland press, was pushed with more frequency in the Yanbian press. Korean victories over the United States were voiced as proof of the tide of revolution sweeping over Asia, a validation of China's influence.

This wave of pro-North Korean internationalism, however, brought difficult questions of national allegiance to the fore in Yanbian, necessitating deep, strong, and consistent messages of centralization from, and loyalty toward, Beijing. Implemented most prominently by Chu Tŏk-hae, such rhetoric strengthened as the war turned toward the Chinese frontier. Chu Tŏk-hae made clear his role in promoting "motherland education" and emphasizing the need to liberate Taiwan as well as South Korea in a speech he made (in Korean) supporting the resolution to oppose U.S. action.<sup>61</sup> Residents of the border zone linked themselves thereby to the nationwide movement and the need to propagandize against U.S. action. However, the media for the war were so abundant that exceptions inevitably slipped through. Cartoons by Beijing artist Xiao Ding (小订) about "Protecting World Peace" evoked the "motherland's independence" alongside the "heroic North Korean People's Army," rendering unclear which nation was the "motherland."<sup>62</sup> Newspaper editors

in Yanbian thereafter felt it necessary to devote a corner of each day's front page to images of ethnic Koreans praising their "Chinese motherland." What is interesting about this hardly subtle pushing of motherland themes in education and propaganda materials is the extent to which they reopened the very question of multiple national loyalties that the CCP and Chu Tök-hae had supposedly settled two years prior in Shenyang.

At the same time, proximity to North Korea led to an ease of mass action. Close connection with North Korea made mobilization at Yanbian University in defense of North Korea more immediate—and even more ardent—than at politically aflame campuses like Beijing University, where protection of the sacred Northeast was more of a rallying cry than defending an abstract North Korea.<sup>63</sup> Model soldiers also played an important role in recruiting students in Yanbian. Recruiting accelerated in Yanbian when, on November 7, 1950, posters and large front-page articles appeared urging men to sign up to fight the Americans. Ethnic Korean model soldiers of Chinese nationality were singled out and accordingly praised.<sup>64</sup> On December 15, 1950, the recruiting drive for participation in the armed struggle in Korea had already succeeded in having 1,500 youths sign up in Yanbian. From 1950 to 1953, nearly 5,000 Yanbian youths signed up to join the Chinese People's Volunteers, while 5,740 signed up to go to Korea as technicians, laborers, and translators. Of these students, an estimated 6,981 were killed or considered missing in action.<sup>65</sup> However, some students with high linguistic aptitude were not permitted to go to the front and stayed behind at Yanbian University or at high schools set up by Chu Tök-hae to develop skills in Russian, which would further cooperation with China's socialist allies.<sup>66</sup>

While military recruiting efforts were expanding as fall changed to winter in 1950, the Yanbian University library was contemplating its very survival. Anticipating American bombing and the physical destruction of the Yanji city center (and therefore the university), Chu Tök-hae and the local government ordered the library's holdings to be moved outside of Yanji proper. Thus, in imitation of the trip to the "Great Rear" of the great northern universities to the southwest during the War of Resistance, the university's library holdings were moved some forty kilometers southwest to a village outside of Helong, where they were kept in a large family compound that had recently been confiscated from a major landlord. The books were finally returned to Yanji city after the front in Korea stabilized, but the concern with assuring their survival in the event of American air raids indicated the university's unique frontline position. One could volunteer not simply to "protect homes" (*baojia*) in China, but also to protect one's library holdings from the foreign

imperialists.<sup>67</sup> Yanbian University's frontline position with ties to North Korea was further seen on September 23, 1950, when vice-chancellor Lin Minqiao led a delegation to North Korea. His entourage was pictured on the front page of the region's major newspaper, indicating support for his continued mission of strengthening institutional and educational ties in Pyongyang.<sup>68</sup>

Yanbian's distinctive position in Sino-North Korean relations was frequently made clear in such images of national and regional leaders, but cadre working in Yanbian's newspapers had to take pains to balance their depictions. Chinese leaders, however distant, simply could not be outshined by the local, charismatic, and Korean-fluent leaders like Lin Minqiao and Chu Tök-hae. One way of balancing this issue was to have Mao frequently channeled via Chu Tök-hae: in other words, Chu Tök-hae's appearances in the press began invariably to mention Chairman Mao, as when Chu was pictured writing a note to Mao Zedong in preparation for celebrating National Day, October 1, 1950, in Yanbian. Chu's letter to Mao was breathlessly described as full of news from local city organizations about the propaganda activities they had undertaken to integrate Yanbian with "the motherland" of China.<sup>69</sup> Publications of Mao's photograph were set alongside a nation-building motif: the design and seal for the People's Republic of China. While these graphics had been widely publicized at their inception in the autumn of 1949, their appearance as front-page material in Yanbian papers in September 1950 reads as a reminder to the Koreans that their foremost pride was to be directed toward the emerging model capital at Beijing, not embattled Pyongyang.<sup>70</sup> Whenever front-page news and photographs appeared about North Koreans visiting in Yanji, Mao's approving attitude toward the development was necessarily discussed.<sup>71</sup> Yet there were exceptions to Mao's appearances in the media. Essays by North Korean officials were occasionally published in Yanbian, sometimes with their flattering photos. Northeast People's Government head Gao Gang was likewise a respected Chinese presence in Yanbian and Northeastern media during the Korean War. On September 6, 1950, Gao Gang's work was the subject of an article that filled up the entire breadth of the front page (at least that portion not taken up by his handsome photograph).<sup>72</sup>

The mainland Chinese press made liberal use of Kim Il Sung's image and name during the war, but these images took on particular significance in Yanbian. On July 16, 1950, the Yanbian newspapers printed photos taken inside a North Korean home, where mothers and children stare up at a portrait of the North Korean leader.<sup>73</sup> (The appearance of this rather worshipful photo, however, might be explained as counterbalancing the

speech on the same page by Kim's eventual rival, Foreign Minister Pak Hōnyōng.)<sup>74</sup> On September 14, 1950, in a supplement titled *Renmin Huakan*, a large photo showed young North Korean female cadets in front of a Kim Il Sung statue, showing that Yanbian news editors countenanced at least a bit of Kim's rising personality cult, certainly more than existed in the *People's Daily*.<sup>75</sup>

In terms of worshipful press treatment, however, no individuals or organizations were more lauded than the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV). When the CPV and the remnants of the Korean People's Army pushed south down the peninsula after November 1950, victories were celebrated in Yanbian. On January 9, 1951, the Yanji city "Resist America, Aid Korea" committee convened a massive rally in the city's center, filling the local assembly ground with tens of thousands of participants and spectators. As it tends to be in Manchuria in January, the weather was very cold, and the Yanji crowd was well bundled. Banners had been made proclaiming, among other things, "Celebrate the Liberation of Seoul." With the CPV in the forefront, the achievements of the North Korean army were also celebrated. The ceremony, in distinction to those going on in distant Chinese provinces like Sichuan at the time, included a large number of North Korean flags.<sup>76</sup> There were also North Korean refugees and orphans in the crowd. Musicians banged cymbals in spite of the cold.<sup>77</sup>

## Conclusion

The rally for the second liberation of Seoul foretold the coming stages of Yanbian's long Korean War. The campaign to repress counter-revolutionaries, implemented in 1951, and the subsequent "Three-Anti and Five-Anti" movements would strike Yanbian with particularly historical force. Uncovering "enemy agents" from within meant hearkening back to and recapitulating detailed debates from the colonial days and the Minsaengdan struggle of the early 1930s. Chu Tōk-hae would attack bandits—alleged spies air-dropped in from South Korea—and demand vigilance of Yanbian residents. Thus the actions in Yanbian during the Korean War sealed China's physical border with North Korea, but did not prevent future Red Guard superpatriots in Yanbian from attacking "revisionism" across the border and struggling against Chu Tōk-hae for his alleged sellout to North Korean interests in the earliest years of the PRC.

While the Chinese Koreans were adamant in their support for the

PRC, they were also supporters of North Korea and risked being seen as perhaps more loyal to the DPRK than to the CCP. That tensions existed (as seen with the Han schools) further suggests that Koreans were not very well assimilated, but rather existed in a much more separate reality than their sometime integration with Han populations (and the Central People's Governments in Shenyang and Beijing) might imply. Still, it seems loyalty to the CCP overrode ethnic tensions. The alternate loyalties and dual nationalism espoused by Chinese Koreans in the years after liberation from Japan made excellent conduits for Sino–North Korean exchange, cooperation, and dialogue.

Chu Tök-hae was at the forefront of this process of exchange with the DPRK, and his activities during the Korean War should become clearer with future research. In particular, Chu's agency in being awarded stewardship of the new Korean Autonomous Region of Yanbian established by the central government in 1952 needs to be examined with reference to the Korean War. Why 1952? Was the establishment of the administrative structure in Yanbian a vote of confidence from Beijing in Chu Tök-hae's ability to contribute to central directives or a move to further collar independent initiatives from, and establish greater control over, Chinese Koreans in Yanbian? In the late 1950s, the Chinese Koreans came to be seen as somewhat of a "model minority," a status attested to by Beijing's facilitation of Tibetan delegations to Yanbian in that period to observe how a faithful and nominally autonomous ethnic region should be run.<sup>78</sup>

Chu Tök-hae's rule was tested from 1951 to 1953 with the emergence of the "Three-Anti, Five-Anti" movements. During the Korean War, the paranoia that swept the mainland also arrived with special emphasis in Yanbian, where Chinese Koreans who had collaborated with Japan were particularly targeted. Although themes of collaboration had been muted since the violence of the Chinese civil-war years, it became clear in Yanbian newspapers and in massive public struggle meetings that the ghosts of Manchukuo had not been entirely exiated. The stigmas faced by Chinese Koreans for having collaborated with the past Japanese occupiers were seen again as a threat that invited dangerous foreign influence into the Chinese northeast. Moving away from such rhetoric, and assuring the central government that South Korean spies were not moving freely among the Chinese Korean population in Yanbian, became a difficult task for the ethnic Korean leadership in Yanji.

With the end of the Korean War, Chinese Koreans were able to resume some semblance of normalcy, taking upon themselves the hard work of assimilation with, and construction of the Chinese mother-

land. The more than ten thousand North Korean refugees who had streamed into Yanbian and Northeast China during the war slowly made their way back to the DPRK, where hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops were stationed until 1958. Premier Zhou Enlai subsequently honored the work of Chu Tök-hae with a visit to Yanbian in 1962, and up through the mid-1960s, by all appearances, it seemed that Chinese Koreans had managed to hurdle the issue of nationality by simply becoming Chinese patriots. In the cauldron of the Cultural Revolution, however, the façade of Han tolerance for ethnic harmony and Korean majorities in Yanbian would come violently askew.<sup>79</sup> Red Guards from Beijing, later guided by envoys from Mao Zedong himself, would arrive in Yanbian to persecute Chu Tök-hae as a *hanjian* (traitor) and to demonize all the aspects of Korean identity that had made Yanbian a model autonomous region, from language instruction to loyal cooperation with North Korea. Chu Tök-hae, unable to be rescued by distant friends in Beijing, lay dying in 1971, the victim of Red Guard attacks. From his perspective at this moment of supreme turbulence, the civil-war era debates of assimilation and the work for communist revolution among Chinese Koreans in Yanbian in the early years of the PRC must have appeared halcyon indeed.

## Notes

In addition to acknowledging the anonymous *Korean Studies* reviewers for their critiques, the author thanks James Gao, who rendered an exquisitely sharp verdict on an earlier draft of this manuscript at the 2008 Association for Asian Studies conference, where Steven Levine also gave valuable feedback. Kim Donggil at Beijing University provided documents from the Russian Archives, Bruce Cumings somehow kept up correspondence, and Chuck Kraus read several drafts and helped to voice the conclusion. Funding for field research in Yanbian was provided by an International Research Grant from the Wang Center at Pacific Lutheran University.

1. The number of terms applied to the Korean minority in China indicates the complexity of the categorization. The People's Republic of China uses the term *Chaioxianzu* (朝鲜族), a term translated in this article via the English adaptation of "Chinese Koreans" or "ethnic Koreans." Occasionally I will employ the term more simply as "Koreans" interchangeably when context allows the substitution. All of these terms, in any case, are quite distinct from *Chaioxian qiaomin* (朝鲜侨民) or *Chaogiao*, which indicates recent Korean immigrants inside of China without Chinese nationality, usually of North Korean origin. North Korean people, or *Bei Chaioxian ren* (北朝鲜人), are indicated as such in English in this article.



2. Pyong Gap Min, "A Comparison of the Korean Minorities in China and Japan," *International Migration Review*, vol. 26, no. 1 (1992): 4–21.
3. Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun* (New York: Norton, 1997), 238–43.
4. Steven I. Levine, *Anvil of Victory: The Communist Revolution in Manchuria, 1945–1948* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 18–20; Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946–1950* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 318–19.
5. Bernard Vincent Olivier, *The Implementation of China's Nationality Policy in the Northeastern Provinces* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1993), 47–55.
6. Hyun-Ok Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed: Empires, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korean Revolution in Manchuria* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).
7. Chae-Jin Lee, *China's Korean Minority: The Politics of Ethnic Education* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986); Changyu Piao [Ch'ang-uk Pak], "The History of Koreans in China and the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture," in *Koreans in China*, ed. Dae-Sook Suh and Edward J. Shultz (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 44–77.
8. Chun-seon Kim, "The Settlement and Repatriation of Koreans in Northeast China after Liberation," *Korea Journal*, 44, no. 4 (2004): 65–110.
9. Charles Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), 18, 172, for instance. Armstrong, obviously, has a very strong grasp of the captured documents in the U.S. National Archives, but there are still many files about North Hamgyōng that lie outside the boundaries of his book.
10. Yang Qing, *Chu Dok-hae Yi Sheng* [The life of Chu Tök-hae] (Yanbian: Yanbian Renmin Chubanshe, 1987); Gao Yongyi, *Zhongguo Chaoxianzu Lishi Yanjiu* 中国朝鲜族历史研究 [Historical research on Chinese Koreans] (Yanbian: Yanbian Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2007).
11. Yanbian Chaoxianzu sizhizhou dang'anguan bian [Yanbian Archives], ed., *Yanbian Dashiji, 1712–1988* (Yanbian: Yanbian Daxue Chubanshe, 1990).
12. Shen Zhihua, "Chunshi xiangyi" hai shi "zhengzhi tianhun"? *Zhong-Chao tongmeng de jianli jiqi yanxu, 1946–1961* ["Lips and teeth" or a "marriage of political convenience"?: The establishment and continuation of the Sino–North Korean alliance, 1946–1961] (Hong Kong: Xianggang Bozhen, 2009); in English, see Adam Cathcart and Charles Kraus, "The Bonds of Brotherhood: New Evidence of Sino–North Korean Exchanges, 1950–1954," forthcoming in *Journal of Cold War Studies*.
13. As Shen Zhihua points out, analysis of the role of regionalism, local areas, or of people-to-people relations has been almost wholly absent in Chinese and North Korean studies, respectively. And indeed, the most comprehensive recent book on the North Korean revolution published in South Korea by Sō Tongman appears almost disinterested in transnational interactions along the Chinese frontier. Finally, Charles Armstrong notes the absence of "ordinary North Koreans" in even the most unimpeachable scholarly works that purport to explain Chinese–North Korean interactions. The

utter lack of similar published criticisms of Chinese–North Korean people-to-people relations indicates just how nascent a field of study this remains at the moment. See Shen Zhihua, “Sino-North Korean Conflict and its Resolution during the Korean War,” trans. Dong Gil Kim and Jeffrey Becker, Cold War International History Project, *Bulletin*, 14/15 (winter 2003–spring 2004): 9–24; Sō Tongman, *Puk Chosŏn sabojejūi ch’ŕje sŏngnipsa, 1945–1961* [The formation of the North Korean socialist system, 1945–1961] (Seoul: Sŏnin, 2005); Charles Armstrong, Review of Andrei Lankov’s *Crisis in North Korea*, *American Historical Review*, 10, no. 5 (2005): 1507.

14. Eun Jung Tae, “Taehanjegukki ‘Gandomunje’üi Chu’i’wa ‘Sikminhwa’” [The ‘Gando region problem’ of the Daehan empire period and the issue of ‘colonization’], *Yŏksa Munje Yŏn’gu*, 17 (2007): 93–122.

15. Park, *Two Dreams*, 39–40.

16. Hongkoo Han, “Wounded Nationalism: The Minsaengdan Incident and Kim Il Sung in Eastern Manchuria” (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1999).

17. Russian Presidential Archive, Soviet Red Army in Manchuria, “Report Regarding Situation after the Japanese Surrender,” Aug. 24, 1945, ADMRF 32/11473/45/173-76/CZD-4.

18. Yanbian History Research Office [Yanbian Lishi Yanjiu suo bian], ed., *Yanbian Lishi Yanjiu* (Yanji: Yanbian Renmin Chubanshe, 1988), 79–82.

19. Zhou Enlai, “State Council Instruction regarding Handling of Agricultural Lands on the Outskirts of Old Liberated Areas” [国务院关于处理老解放区市郊农业土地问题的指示], January 13, 1950, *Jianguo Yilai Zhou Enlai Wengao Jianguo yilai zhou enlai wengao* [Zhou Enlai’s Manuscripts Since the Founding of the P.R.C.], vol. 2 (January 1950–June 1950) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2008), 45–48.

20. Louis Allen, *The End of the War in Asia* (London: Harrt-Davis, MacGibbon, 1976).

21. Lü Minghui, *Tonghua ‘Er San’ Shijian* [The Tonghua February 3 Incident] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 2006); see also Yanbian History Research Office, *Yanbian Lishi Yanjiu*, 72–73.

22. Piao, “The History of Koreans in China,” 67–70, offers figures of 1,658,572 in 1944 and 1,110,657 in 1949; Chae-Jin Lee estimates a figure of 1.4 million Koreans in China in August 1945, and Kim Chun-seun, “The Settlement and Repatriation of Koreans,” 86, 94, asserts a figure of 2.3 million Koreans in China in August 1945, 800,000 of whom returned to Korea subsequently.

23. Yanbian History Research Office, *Yanbian Lishi Yanjiu*, 26.

24. Adam Cathcart and Charles Kraus, “Peripheral Influence: The Sinuiju Student Incident of 1945 and the Impact of Soviet Occupation in North Korea,” *Journal of Korean Studies*, 13, no. 1 (2008): 1–28.

25. Woo-Gil Choi, “The Korean Minority in China: The Change of Its Identity,” *Development and Society*, 30, no. 1 (2001): 120, 128; Kim, “The Settlement and Repatriation of Koreans.”

26. Yingshu Shen, “The Practice of Protection Policy Put toward the People of Korean Ethnic by CPC During the Liberation War” 解放战争时期中共对东北朝鲜族保护政策的实践, *Yanbian Daxue Xuebao* (Social Sciences Edition), no. 2 (2007).
27. Kim, “The Settlement and Repatriation of Koreans,” 95–96.
28. Yang, *Chu Tök-hae Yi Sheng*, 74.
29. Kim Il Sung, “Workers in Culture Should Become Combatants on the Cultural Front: Speech at a Meeting of Propagandists of the Provincial People’s Committees, Political Parties and Social Organizations, Cultural Workers and Artists in North Korea,” May 24, 1946, *Works, Vol. 2, January–December 1946* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1981), 208–209.
30. This article will also use the disputed term “Manchuria” to denote Northeast China, simply because the term Manzhouli was in popular usage among Chinese officials in the period covered here and the term is inclusive of “the Northeast,” or Dongbei, without excluding Korean readers.
31. Chen Yun, *Chen Yun Wenji*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2005); Kim, “The Settlement and Repatriation of Koreans,” 89.
32. Yang, *Chu Tök-hae Yi Sheng*, 73–74.
33. Gao, *Zhongguo Chaoxianzu Lishi Yanjiu*, 133–42; Yang, *Chu Tök-hae Yi Sheng*, 96.
34. Yang, *Chu Tök-hae Yi Sheng*, 137, 171.
35. Yang, *Chu Tök-hae Yi Sheng*, 100.
36. Adam Cathcart and Charles Kraus, “Internationalist Culture in North Korea, 1945–1950,” *Review of Korean Studies*, 11, no. 3 (2008): 123–48.
37. Yang, *Chu Tök-hae Yi Sheng*, 106.
38. Zhou Baozhong’s importance to the North Korean narrative is seen in his inclusion in *Kim Jong Suk Biography* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Press, 2003).
39. *Dongbei Chaoxian Renmin Ribao* [Northeast Korean People’s Daily], Oct. 29, 1949.
40. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, People’s Republic of China, #106-00001-01, 朝鲜愿与我建立外交关系事致周恩来总理的函 (中文, 朝文), October 4–6, 1949.
41. Levine, *Anvil of Victory*, 96.
42. Zhang Zhenglong, *Xue Bai, Xue Hong* [White snow, red blood] (Changsha: Hunan Renmin Chubanshe, 1989).
43. Yang, *Chu Tök-hae Yi Sheng*, 103–107.
44. Yang, *Chu Tök-hae Yi Sheng*, 107.
45. Gao, *Zhongguo Chaoxianzu Lishi Yanjiu*, 114–17.
46. Yang, *Chu Tök-hae yi sheng*, pp. 108–109. See also Wang Tük-sin, *Chu Tök-hae üi ilsaeng* (Yanji: Yönböön Inmin Chulpansa, 1988).
47. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, People’s Republic of China, #106-00022-02, 关于琿春铁路事. Guanyu Hunchun tielushi, “The Matter of the Hunchun Railway,” March 17–27, 1950.

48. Andrei Lankov, "China's Korean Autonomous Prefecture and China-Korea Border Politics," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 35-1-07, Sept. 3, 2007.

<http://japanfocus.org/products/details/2509> (accessed July 17, 2008).

49. Yang, *Chu Tök-hae Yi Sheng*, 107–110.

50. Yanbian University's connections with North Korea in this period are detailed in a comprehensive record of Red Guard struggle sessions against Chu Tök-hae in 1969. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Red Guards framed much of their criticism of Chu on nationalistic grounds. After quoting Mao's injunction to privilege Chinese over foreign products, they criticized Chu's injunctions in 1949 to "study Kim Il Sung University." Yanbian Daxue Geming Weiyuanhui Jiaoyu Gemingzu [Yanbian University Revolutionary Committee Revolutionary Education Organization], *Zui E Yi Bai Lie: Zichanjieji Zhishifenzi Tongzhi Jiu Yan'da (Gongpi Panyong)* [Series of one hundred guilty acts: Policies of capitalists and intellectuals at old Yanbian University (furnished for criticism and trial)] (Yanbian: Yanbian University Revolutionary Committee Education Organization, December 1969), 31. On North Korean criticism of Red Guard publications in 1969, see Bernd Schafer, "Weathering the Sino-Soviet Conflict: The GDR and North Korea, 1949–1989," Cold War International History Project *Bulletin*, 14/15 (winter 2003–spring 2004).

51. Yanbian Chaoxianzu sizhizhou dang'anguan bian, *Yanbian Dashiji*, 136.

52. Yanbian Daxue Geming Weiyuanhui Jiaoyu Gemingzu, *Zui E Yi Bai Lie*, 31. Lin Minqiao's report on his delegation's activities, written for Chu Tök-hae and titled *Fang Chao huibao* [Collected report on trip to Korea], is not available in the Yanbian University Archives, indicating it was probably destroyed during or prior to the Cultural Revolution, but it is excerpted in the Red Guard testimony. Appreciation is extended to Yanbian University archivist Nan Gongshan for her assistance with the catalogues.

53. Yanbian Daxue Geming Weiyuanhui Jiaoyu Gemingzu, *Zui E Yi Bai Lie*, 32.

54. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, People's Republic of China, #118-00080-18, 青岛市军管会外事处关于北朝鲜侨民管理手续问题的请示. Qingdaoshi junguanhui waishichu guanyu Bei Chaoxian qiaomin guanli shouxu wenti de qingshi. "Request for Direction from Qingdao City Military Administration Committee's Foreign Affairs Department Regarding the Problem of Administrative Procedure for North Korean Immigrants," May 4, 1950, p. 1.

55. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, People's Republic of China, #118-00080-18, 青岛市军管会外事处关于北朝鲜侨民管理手续问题的请示. Qingdaoshi junguanhui waishichu guanyu Bei Chaoxian qiaomin guanli shouxu wenti de qingshi, p. 2; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, People's Republic of China, #118-00080-19, 关于朝鲜侨民管理手续问题的意见. Guanyu Chaoxian qiaomin guanli shouxu wenti de yijian. "Opinions Regarding Procedures for Management of Korean Immigrants," May 8, 1950.

56. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, People's Republic of China, #118-00343-02, 四平, 大连, 承德, 哈尔滨, 沈阳, 同化, 等市及抚顺, 延吉, 凤城, 穆陵等县人民法院外侨刑事案件判决书. Siping, Dalian, Chengde, Haerbin, Shenyang, Tonghua deng shi ye

Fushun, Yanji, Fengcheng deng xian renmin fayuan waiqiao xingshi anjian tanjueshu. "Siping, Dalian, Chengde, Harbin, Shenyang, Tonghua, and Other Cities, and Fushun, Yanji, Fengcheng and other Counties' Record of People's Court Decisions Regarding Incidents Involving Foreigners," 1950, April 24–December 30, pp. 3, 10, 15–20, 143–48.

57. James Z. Gao, "War Culture, Nationalism, and Political Campaigns, 1950–1953," in *Chinese Nationalism in Perspective: Historical and Recent Cases*, ed. George Wei and Xiaoyuan Liu (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001).

58. Almost nothing seems to have been published about Chinese Communist depictions of Syngman Rhee or anti–South Korea propaganda in China during the years 1945–1950. A survey of the influential *Dongbei Ribao* (Northeast Daily), published by the CCP in Harbin after 1946, might be a logical place to begin such research. See Adam Cathcart, "Anti-Japanese Propaganda in Northeast China, 1948," unpublished ms. For an archives-based look at Korean War hysteria more generally in Northeast China, see Wang Xiaodong, "Cold War in Manchuria: Sino-Soviet–United States Relations, 1948–1953" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004), 221–36.

59. Yanbian Chaoxianzu sizhizhou dang'anguan bian, *Yanbian Dashiji*, 144.

60. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, People's Republic of China, #117-00034-03, 关于朝鲜驻华使馆人员参加我反美侵朝侵台活动事. Guanyu Chaoxian zhuHua shiguan renyuan canjia wo fanMei qin Chao qin Tai huodongshi. "Regarding the Matter of a Committee from the Korean Embassy Participating in Our 'Anti-U.S. Invading Korea and Taiwan' Activities," July 19, 1950.

61. *Dongbei Chaoxian Renmin Ribao*, July 22, 1950, p. 1.

62. *Dongbei Chaoxian Renmin Ribao*, Sept. 20, 1950, p. 4.

63. An Tiewu, interview with the author in Yanji, July 27, 2008.

64. Kim Yongwan (金永万), "Our Lin," *Dongbei Chaoxian Renmin Ribao*, Nov. 7, 1950, p. 1.

65. Yanbian Chaoxianzu sizhizhou dang'anguan bian, *Yanbian Dashiji*, 147.

66. An Tiewu, interview with the author in Yanji, July 27, 2008.

67. Yanbian Chaoxianzu sizhizhou dang'anguan bian, *Yanbian Dashiji*, 72–73.

68. *Dongbei Chaoxian Renmin Ribao*, Sept. 23, 1950, p. 1.

69. *Dongbei Chaoxian Renmin Ribao*, Sept. 17, 1950, p. 1.

70. *Dongbei Chaoxian Renmin Ribao*, Sept. 20, 1950, p. 1.

71. *Dongbei Chaoxian Renmin Ribao*, Sept. 14, 1950, p. 1.

72. *Dongbei Chaoxian Renmin Ribao*, Sept. 6, 1950, p. 1. For later accusations of North Korean spying in China and a connection to Gao Gang, who was purged in 1954, see Kang Sheng, "On Case Examination Work," February 8, 1968, speech delivered to People's Liberation Army/mass organizations/case examination groups in Jilin Province, in Michael Schoenhals, ed., *China's Cultural Revolution, 1966–1969: Not a Dinner Party* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

73. *Dongbei Chaoxian Renmin Ribao*, July 16, 1950, p. 2.

74. On the December 1955 show trial and probable execution of Pak Hōnyōng, see

Dae-Sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 134–36. According to Suh, “[Pak] was also accused of planting many of his agents in the government and the party from October 1946 to 1953 and of disrupting the political process in the North. Abusing his position as foreign minister, Pak was accused of staffing the embassies in Moscow and Peking so as to disrupt the foreign relations of the North” (p. 136). The Foreign Ministry Archive has a fair amount of correspondence from Pak, for example, PRC Foreign Ministry Archive, #106-00022-03, May 21–27, 1950.

75. *Dongbei Chaoxian Renmin Ribao*, Sept. 14, 1950, p. 4.

76. Stephen Endicott, *Red Earth: Revolution in a Sichuan Village* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988), 47–48.

77. *Dongbei Chaoxian Renmin Ribao*, Jan. 10, 1950, p. 1.

78. Tibetologists at Sichuan University describe the events, based on their readings of the *Xizang Ribao* (Tibet Daily) from 1954. Personal correspondence with Chen Bo, September 18, 2010.

79. Tsurushima Setsure, “The Effects of the Cultural Revolution on the Korean Minority in Yanpian,” *Korean Studies*, 3 (1979): 93–124.