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**Ethnic Transnational Capital Transfers and Development
- Utilization of Ties with South Korea
in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, China**

by

Outi Luova

TURUN YLIOPISTO

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From the Centre for East Asian Studies
University of Turku
Turku, Finland

Supervisor:

Professor Klaus Mühlhahn
Centre for East Asian Studies
University of Turku
Turku, Finland

Reviewers:

Professor Mette Halskov Hansen
Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages
University of Oslo
Oslo, Norway

And

Professor Dr Bettina Gransow
Seminar of East Asian Studies
Freie University Berlin
Berlin, Germany

Opponent:

Professor Mette Halskov Hansen
Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages
University of Oslo
Oslo, Norway

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SUMMARY

The broad aim of this work was to study the utilization of cross-border ethnic ties in the economic development of China's ethnic minority regions, a topic which has been marginalized in prior research. This research was further defined as a study on ethnic transnational capital transfers, which were approached with two new methods. First, both old and new transnational communities were combined in the study. Secondly, the definition of transnationalism from above was further defined into two different methodological categories: actors and activators. The focus of this study was then state-activated ethnically-based transnational migration and business in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, located in Northeast China. The management of these two fields is evolving, and thus this study has only described an early phase of their development in Yanbian (mid 1980s-2005). The practices and policies involved are going to change, although it can be assumed that the institutional arrangements will become more unified, and that regional differences in the policies and practices will prevail.

In this study it is shown, that drawing on the traditions of overseas Chinese work, the Yanbian administration was able to mobilize various South Korean resources. The local government was also supportive of ethnically-based labour migration from Yanbian to South Korea and later developed interest in the various development opportunities afforded by the migrant remittances, but it did not launch effective policies to transfer and inject the new human and social migrant capital into local development. The creative utilization of transnational ethnic capital was mainly constrained by the inflexible system of the planned economy and the prevailing attitude that neglected small-scale business and the abilities labour migrants. The neglect of the development potential embedded in transnational ties of ethnic minorities left important resources untapped. Nevertheless, in Yanbian, Koreans have provided an important impetus for modernization.

Although the management of the Korean capital transfers to Yanbian was politically sensitive, to a large extent the work has not been restricted because of ethno-political issues. The central criteria for the approved transnational practices of Yanbian can be summarized into two key concepts, viz: disciplined organizations and a trustworthy relationship with Beijing. Contrary to the cautionary assessments both in China and in the West, this research suggests that transnational ethnically-based economic exchanges might reinforce the allegiance of cross-border ethnic minorities to China. As the expanding economic exchanges created more employment and well-being, the loyalty of the Koreans toward China was re-consolidated. This development was partly aided by the disillusionment of Yanbian Koreans with their membership in South Korean society. Furthermore, Yanbian's contacts with the domestic economy were strengthened when the local economy grew with the help of South Korean investments.

Keywords: *China, international migration, transnational capital transfers, local administration, transnationalism from above, development, China's Korean minority, Yanbian.*

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ABBREVIATIONS

CASS – The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

CCP – The Chinese Communist Party

DoC – The Department of Commerce

DoLSS – The Department of Labour and Social Security

IPRA - The International Public Relations Association

JIC – The Jilin International Economic and Technical Corporation

MoL – The Ministry of Labour

MoLSS – The Ministry of Labour and Social Security

GATS – The General Agreement on Trade in Services

MofCom – The Ministry of Commerce

MofTEC – The Ministry of Trade and Economic Cooperation

RMB - Renminbi

USD – United States Dollar

1. INTRODUCTION

Transnational ethnic and kinship ties have provided a significant development resource for regions inhabited by ethnic minorities in China. Since the inauguration of China's modernization politics in 1978, these regions were for a long time neglected in China's overall development strategy. Further, the implementation of the policy of "opening-up to the outside world" was also delayed in these regions. In this disadvantageous situation, ties with kin in other countries provided alternative resources and channels for development. Both ordinary people and local leaders in ethnic minority regions have, to varying degrees, tried to mobilize these ties with economic goals in mind.

Despite their importance, the role of minorities' transnational ties for local economic development has not received adequate research attention, not in China, nor outside the country. Although researchers have admitted the significance of these ties for development, transnational economic activities have remained sidetracked. The gap becomes particularly salient as China began to mobilize these ethnic resources for the support of the Western Development Program which was launched in 1999.

This thesis aims to provide an initial study of the mobilization of one minority's transnational ethnic ties on local economic development. The attempts by local government to create and manage the cross-border ethnic ties are studied within the framework of "transnationalism from above". The regional focus is on Yanbian, a Korean autonomous prefecture in the Jilin Province, which has been rather successful in mobilizing ethnic Korean transnational resources for local economic development. Economic development is defined in this study as a process that influences growth and the restructure of an economy, to enhance the economic wellbeing of a community: the creation of jobs and wealth, and the improvement in quality of life. Because communities differ in their geographic and political strengths and weaknesses, each community will have a unique set of challenges for economic development.¹

¹ This definition has found inspiration in the definition of economic development provided by the International Economic Development Council (2006).

Alan and Josephine Smart have noted that transnational flows of labour and capital have been studied separately by different scholars with different methods. Still, "the disjunction between the movements of people and capital will become less significant" because new migrants are likely to become self-employed international entrepreneurs. Thus, they suggest a combination of these two processes in current studies on transnational economic activities.² Because ethnically-generated labour migration and international investments are clearly entangled, I find it relevant to combine both labour migration and business activities in a study of transnational capital transfers and development.

Transnational economic activities have expanded tremendously during the past twenty years and affect each centre and corner of the world. These activities do not take place in a vacuum but they are moulded by regional, national, and local factors. As noted by a leading scholar in transnational economic activities, Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, "the contextual conditions variously facilitate or impede, foster or discourage, demand or preclude cross-border activities".³ Compared with other regions in the world, the economic resources provided by transnational ethnic ties in China's border regions bear similarities: donations and investments, and labour migration generated benefit like remittances, new skills and ideas. However, the framework for these activities certainly is different from other countries.

What clearly is specific for China is the general framework created by the Party-state apparatus that penetrates to the grassroots level. Against the accusations for essentializing China, the well-known scholar on Chinese migration, Rachel Murphy argues that China still is different just because of the strong presence of the state even at the local level.⁴ Although recent studies point out the dilution of the state-party system as a result of decentralization, and as new actors have carved out power, the general conclusions have been that the Party still holds the power in core issues.⁵ Dawid Zweig has shown in his study on China's internationalization, that the management of global economic ties in fact have strengthened

² Smart & Smart 1999, 107.

³ Guarnizo 2003, 670.

⁴ Murphy 2002, 129, 177.

⁵ For example Michel Oksenberg constructs China's political system around three types of institutions, of which the first is the core state apparatus. The two other types of institutions are different kinds of associations and organizations, and linkage institutions which are created to manipulate, control and exploit the outside world. Oksenberg 2001, 21-22.

the local state. Yet, at the same time, while creating rules for international cooperation, the local officials allowed new agents to enter their domain. When doing this, they have weakened their own leverage.⁶ Furthermore, Maria Edin has observed that while the initiative and operation has been decentralized, higher levels of government have strengthened their control over leading cadres at local levels in order to enable and ensure that the state-sanctioned prioritized goals will be attained.⁷

It is also important to note that there exist clear regional differences with regard to the penetration of the central state and the Party in local affairs. Michel Oksenberg mentions the ethnic composition of the locality, local history, extent of foreign presence, level of economic development and the preferences of local leaders as central factors which affect the structure and functions of the local state.⁸ The geographical area of this study, Northeast China, could be designated as a stronghold of the Party and the state, because of the prominence of state-owned industry in the region. With regard to border areas, functions of the local state in border regions are characterized by China's concern for border security and national unity. Border areas have been close to the centre in terms of policies.⁹ Thus, the presence of the state-party apparatus was relatively strong in Yanbian owing to its location in Northeast China and at the border.

Thus, the role of state can be regarded as central in defining the development goals and their political framework in Yanbian. The local level authorities were responsible to work for these state-sanctioned goals, but they were, to a certain extent, able to decide the means, according to local conditions. The government of Yanbian was also able to utilize foreign ethnic ties on its own initiative to fulfil the targets set for local economic development. However, while creating ethnic cross-border ties, they had to accord to the centre's political concern for national unity and border security. Local level authorities were responsible for maintaining social and political stability, and this requirement was of primary importance in border regions.

⁶ Zweig 2002, 264, 274.

⁷ Edin 2000, 4-5.

⁸ Oksenberg 2001, 25.

⁹ This has been stated clearly for example with regard to Guangxi. Hendrichke 1997, 27.

Research Questions

My purpose is to study the utilization of transnational ethnic ties in the development of China's border regions within the framework of state-sanctioned goals of economic development and demand for social stability. I shall analyse how and why, the local authorities have utilized these ties within this given framework, and how the policies have changed since the late 1980s. I aim to describe main features of the local official attempts to mobilize these ties, and provide an analysis of the political-organizational context for those pursuits. As there are no previous studies on this topic, I find it relevant to conduct a study which describes a more general framework for the utilization of ethnic resources at the local level. Within Chinese studies, this thesis can be placed somewhere among studies on ethnic issues, local government, transnationalism and development questions.

The study is constructed as a case study in ethnic transnational capital transfers. The transnational ethnic capital transfers which take place in the case-region, Yanbian, will be studied as transnationalism from above, where the local officials engineer transnational ethnic and family ties and mobilize the resources embedded in them in order to fulfill the important state-sanctioned goals. The practices of transnationalism from above will be analyzed within two fields of policies, viz: 1) the promotion of ties with Koreans, who reside abroad, in the traditional manner of overseas Chinese work, and 2) the management of international ethnically-based labour mobility. For methodological purposes, capital is divided into three different types: economic, social and human capital. The study focuses on the attempts of the administration to transfer as much capital as possible within these two fields. Thus, this analysis also includes those practices aimed to increase the volume of the capital which can be transferred. The transfers will be analyzed within a local and national political-administrative framework, paying attention to the constraints embedded in the administrative system and the political nature of the cross-border ethnic ties.

My main questions are:

1. What has been done to mobilize the ethnic ties? Which organs have been involved? What types of transnational ethnic ties have been mobilized?

2. What factors in the political and administrative environment have facilitated or impeded the utilization of transnational ethnic ties in Yanbian? How has Yanbian's position at the border and its cross-border ethnic relations affected the formation of the policies and practices?

3. What specific features is it possible to discern in Yanbian, when compared with the coastal regions and border regions?

China's continental border areas are inhabited by over 30 cross-border ethnic groups. The cross-border relations of each ethnic group differ from each other and also the local conditions along the border vary from region to region. Thus, it is not reasonable to do research on ethnic capital transfers in China's border regions in general, but instead to concentrate on a specific region and ethnic group. As the purpose of this study is to analyze the development impact, I have decided to choose an area which has benefited significantly from the transnational ethnic ties, i.e. Yanbian, a Korean autonomous prefecture in Northeast China. The majority of the foreign investments in Yanbian originate from South Korea. Informal shuttle trade conducted while visiting relatives abroad increased the living standards of many local Koreans. Labour migration to South Korea has provided a tremendous source of economic, human and social capital. It has also given a boost to a wide scale of businesses in Yanbian, ranging from travel agencies to construction companies building houses for rich returnees. In addition, the local government has taken an active part in mobilizing the ethnic ties for local economic development. From this basis, Yanbian provides a suitable case for a study in ethnic transnational capital transfers. The study covers a time period from the mid 1980s, when Yanbian gradually was allowed to open up, up to year 2005 when the tenth five year plan ended. Since South Korea has provided the most important source of capital for Yanbian during the period under study, the focus will be on that country. Hence, this definition excludes capital transfers from North Korea. However, North Korea will be discussed in this study when relevant to the understanding of capital transfers from South Korea. A deeper inquiry into the role of North Korea would have been useful for this study, but it has proved impossible to conduct systematically because it is difficult to obtain information about the country.

The study contributes to our understanding of the emerging transnational economic activities in China's border regions. Especially, the study brings new basic information about the

evolving management of ethnically-based international migration and investment flows, and about the political-administrative framework and regional developments which influence it. The study also highlights the specific features of the policies and processes of the "opening-up to the outside world" in the border areas. Through this analysis, the thesis deepens our understanding of the shifting positions of ethnic minorities in China during the period of reform and under the influence of globalization. In addition to academic significance, this study has practical relevance. By providing information of best practices and worst bottlenecks, the results indicate how to enhance the utilization of these resources for the development of border regions inhabited by ethnic minorities.

Previous Research

In recent studies on China's border regions and ethnic minorities, the role of minorities' transnational ties in local economic development has not received much attention, either in China, or outside the country. Although researchers have admitted their importance in development, transnational economic activities have remained a side issue.

In China, academic discussion on the definition and characteristics of cross-border or transnational ethnic groups emerged in the mid 1980s. This was a reaction to the opening of China's borders and the consequent need to understand the impact of minorities' cross-border contacts for border security and social stability in border regions. The usage of ethnic transnational ties in economic development has received prior attention within two fields of research: in the study of the economic development of border regions inhabited by ethnic minorities (e.g. books by Che Zhejiu ed. 1995 and Li Zhuqing & Na Ri 1998) and in the study of ethnic minorities (e.g. books by Jin Chunzi & Wang Jianmin eds. 1994; Zhao Tingguang & Liu Dacheng eds. 1998; and Mandu'ertu, Li Bin, Chen Jingyuan 1999). Within both fields of study, there are sporadic notions on different kinds of cross-border ethnic economic activities and their importance for economic development.

In the studies on Chinese Koreans, ethnic Korean researchers have, in general, praised the contributions of Koreans for the economic construction of Yanbian (e.g. Che Zhejiu 1995). Some research articles have described the important role of ethnic ties in the attempts to

attract foreign investments to Yanbian. At the same time, they have mentioned the political difficulties embedded in these ties (e.g. Jin Yongwan 1999, Jin Zhongguo 1994a). Labour migration to South Korea has caught attention among many Chinese Korean scholars, but they have mainly been concerned with the negative consequences of migration: increasing income gaps, social problems, demographic changes, and the lack of injection of migrants' new skills and capital into their home region (Kim Juksan 1996, Zheng Xinzhe 1998 and 1999, Jin Zhongguo 1999). There are still no studies on how the transnational ethnic ties have been mobilized for the benefit of the local economy, and nor are there any satisfactory estimations of the success of these policies.

Outside China, studies which deal with border-crossing ties are few, and of those, often focus on ethnic tensions (Michael Clarke 2003) or identity formation (Justin Rudelson 1998, Uradyn E. Bulag 2002, Mika Toyota 2003, in the case of Koreans: e.g. Choi Woo-Gil 2001, Rowan Pease 2001). Some edited volumes include articles which discuss cross-border ethnic activities and their importance (Evans & Hutton & Kuah 2000; Fredrick S. Starr 2004; Morris Rossabi 2004). Given the small amount of studies, a literature review on cross-border ethnic economic activities would only remain a stopgap. A wider view allows a look at the transnational economic activities as a part of the ethnic minorities' economic opportunities and challenges during the reform era. Thus, what kind of picture does recent research provide on the role of China's ethnic minorities in economic development?

Dru Gladney's ([1991] 1996) research on the Hui Muslims reflects a positive picture. According to him, the Hui were able to revitalize their traditional trade practices after 1978. They prospered through participation in small scale industry as well as domestic and international trade. Remittances from foreign relatives also helped the Hui villages to thrive. The contributions to the edited volume "Where China Meets Southeast Asia" highlight the importance of traditional cross-border ethnic ties in the development of local economy. Yet, for example Kuah Khun Eng (Evans & Hutton & Kuah 2000) points out that the under-developed economy and lack of regulation on, and experience in, international trade, restrain the mobilization of the advantageous ethnic cross-border ties.

Depictions of Chinese Koreans often inform us about a prosperous ethnic minority (e.g. Mackerras 1994; Suh & Shultz 1990). However, Bernard Vincent Olivier (1993) draws a more complex picture. His Doctoral dissertation demonstrated that Chinese Koreans had severe difficulties in adapting to the market reforms. He gave three explanations for these difficulties. Firstly, Koreans stubbornly clung to wet rice cultivation and were reluctant to engage in other activities. They were not interested in starting sideline activities or learning new skills. Secondly, many Koreans shared the Confucian value that it is disgraceful to engage in trade and thus the spirit of entrepreneurship was absent among them. Partly for this reason, the traditional Korean rural society was much less commercialised than the Han Chinese one. It lacked the tradition and experience in business. Thirdly, the extremely politicised Chinese Koreans had benefited from the egalitarian socialist economic system. They were reluctant to give up the safe collective system and become exposed to the competition of free market oriented system. Olivier also paid attention to the restraints which the restrictive trade policies and regional politics put on the development of cross-border ethnically-based trade. Likewise, Uradyn E. Bulag (2000) discerned difficulties among Chinese Mongols to adapt into the market-driven reform era.

The opportunity to migrate opened a suitable path for ethnic Koreans to enhance their living conditions. Migration has proved a practical solution to escape poverty in the case of other minorities, too. A study on the domestic migration of ethnic minorities from Guizhou, shows that the remittances and the new skills of the returnees had a considerable positive effect on the local economies of the migrant sending villages. One of the conclusions of this study was that the economic underdevelopment of ethnic minority areas does not depend on the alleged backwardness of ethnic minorities, but rather more on the tough environment. (Zhang Jijiao 2003)

Hence, the reform policies had different outcomes among the ethnic minorities due to different traditions as well as socio-political and economic circumstances: it empowered the Huis to invigorate old business traditions while it deprived the Koreans of their secure economic position. Only the gradual opening up of the ethnic transnational ties helped the Koreans to find new alternative ways to improve their own economy. Yet, Xiaoming Chen (2005) suggested that the development of ethnically-based trade in Yanbian has been hindered

by the lack of specific native place ties of foreign Koreans, due to an inadequate infrastructure and economic complementarity, and because of regional political tensions. Furthermore, Xiaosung Gu and Brantley Womack (Gu & Womack 2000; Womack 2001) who have studied border trade at the Sino-Vietnamese border, have paid attention to the political and administrative obstacles of cross-border economic activities. On the one hand, the hostilities between China and Vietnam obstructed them, on the other, the authorities in both countries neglected the small-scale border market trade because it did not bring significant profits or revenues.

While the ability of the ethnic minorities to engage in ethnically-based economic endeavours varied between regions, there were variations even within regions and different time-periods. Research on Xinjiang reveals this in a clear way. According to Sean S. Roberts (2004), members of ethnic minorities in the border areas and in bigger cities of Xinjiang were able to profit from the regional trade with Pakistan and Central Asian countries. Yet, he stated that since the latter part of the 1990s, their role as "middlemen" was diminishing, as the Han Chinese manufacturers had been able to create direct links with their Central Asian partners. At the same time, a majority of the ethnic minority population of Xinjiang has not gained many benefits from the reforms. Alongside the reforms, the state has promoted domestic migration from the interior of China to Xinjiang. Other studies indicate how the competition for jobs and natural resources has tightened between the ethnic minorities and the Han Chinese, in the favour of the latter (Becquelin 2000; Fuller & Lipman 2004). Mette Halskov Hansen (1999b) has observed similar tendencies in Yunnan.

While these studies have disclosed the varying positions of ethnic minorities in local economic development, from active and significant to deprived, the national level discourse still mainly describe ethnic minorities as non-modern and immobile. This discrepancy has been revealed in Elena Barabantseva's (2005) Doctoral Dissertation on the positions of ethnic minorities and overseas Chinese in China's modernization project. She showed how the overseas Chinese have been lauded for their mobility and modernity, yet conversely, the ethnic minorities depicted in localized terms and rather as a development problem than as an asset. This discourse has prevailed despite several clear cases where ethnic minority areas have done better in economic terms, than Han Chinese areas.

Thus, recent scholarship has revealed the ambivalent economic position of ethnic minorities in the reform era. Studies have acknowledged the importance of ethnic transnational relations for the economic development of ethnic minorities, and hinted at political, cultural and socio-economic factors which impede their mobilization. However, there are still no studies which focus on the issue. Thus, the purpose of this work is to partially fill the gap through a detailed case study on the utilization of ethnic transnational ties in local economic development in Yanbian. The previous studies provide a useful outline of a road map for this study.

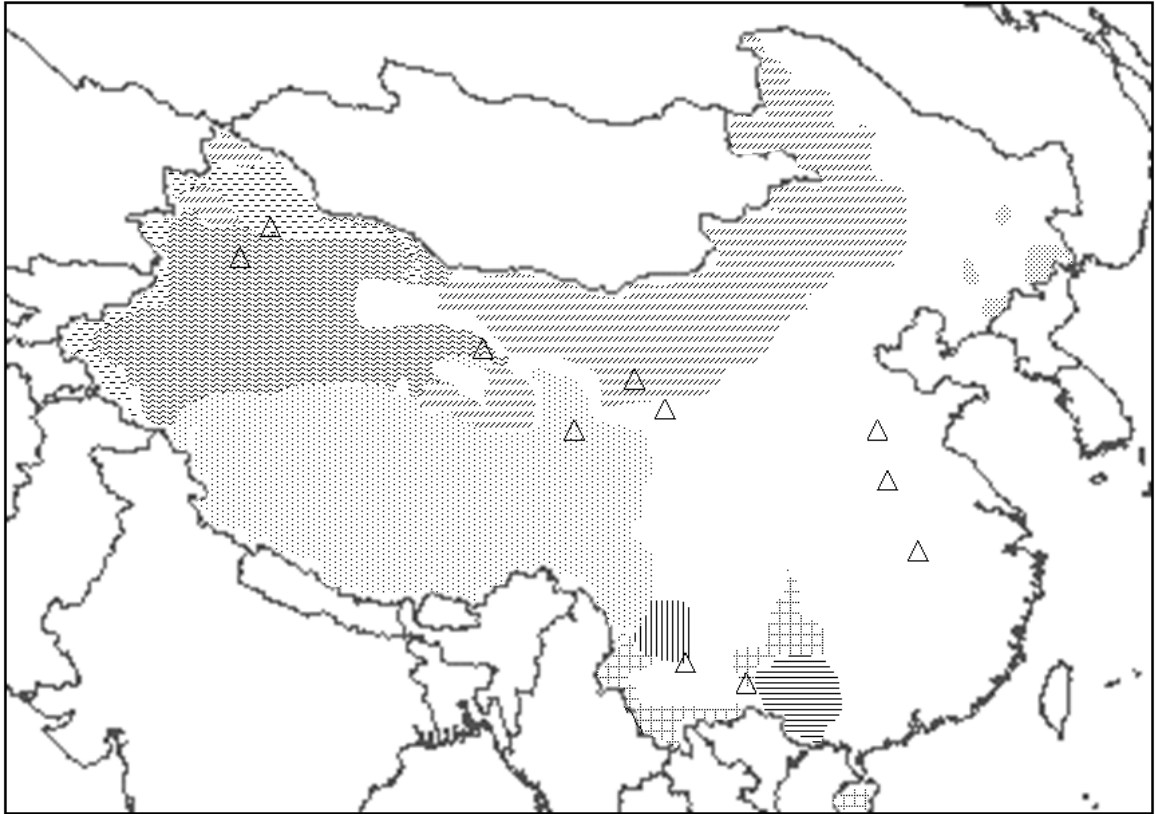
China's Cross-border Ethnic Minorities and Their Transnational Ethnic Ties

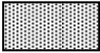




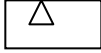
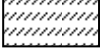
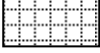

The economic potential inherent in the cross-border ethnic ties could be easily estimated if we only look at the economic development level of the area of inhabitancy of the kin-group. Clearly, the Koreans, the Tai and the Russians distinguish in this respect, while on average, the other neighbouring countries with co-ethnic populations have a lower standard of living than China. This conventional way of estimating the economic resources embedded in the ethnic ties is, however, rather limited. Due to the processes of migration and globalization, members of these ethnic groups are distributed all over the world. Thus, ethnic transnational resources can be located in countries far away from the adjacent kin-state. For example, due to the conflicts of Indochina, the co-ethnics of the Chinese Miao (including the Hmong) have been scattered to different parts of the world. Outside China and the continental Southeast Asia, the Hmong-diaspora is estimated to exceed 300 000 people, the majority of them living in the USA.¹⁰ Furthermore, as transnational communities can be built upon a common religion, Chinese Muslims are linked with the oil-producing countries of Middle-East through the bonds of common faith. In all, ethnic cross-border groups have links even beyond the adjoining countries.

Yet, the willingness of China to promote cross-border economic activities may be influenced by political considerations. Firstly, those groups which have a kin-state abroad (see Table 1 on page 20) may desire to separate from China and join the kin-state. This tendency might be accentuated by the fact that China has, during its history, expanded its territory over

¹⁰ Lemoine 2005, 6-7.

Map 1. The Main Ethnic Minority Areas in China



	Korean		Zhuang		Uighur
	Tibetan		Yi		Hui
	Mongolian		Bouyei, Hani Miao, Tai, Yao, Yi and others.		Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Russian, Tajik, Uzbek and others.

Source: Adapted from June Teufel Dreyer (1976). *China's Forty Millions. Minority Nationalities and National Integration in the People's Republic of China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Table 1. The Largest Cross-border Ethnic Groups, Their Languages, Religions and Current Kin-states

Region	Ethnic Group and its population in millions	Religion	Language	Current Kin-state
Northwest (Xinjiang)	Uighur (8,4), Kazakh (1,2)	Islam	Turkic languages	Kazakstan*
	Hui (9,8)	Islam	Chinese	
West (Tibet)	Tibetan (5,4)	Lama Buddhism	Tibetan	
South (Yunnan and Guangxi)	Zhuang (16,2), Bouyei (3,0), Hani (1,4)	Polytheism	Tai languages	
	Tai (1,2)	Buddhism	Tai	Thailand
	Miao (8,9), Yi (7,8), Yao (2,6)	Polytheism	Tibeto-Burman languages	
	Hui	Islam	Chinese	
Northeast (Jilin, Heilongjiang, Liaoning)	Korean (2,0)	Buddhism, Christianity, Shamanism	Korean	North and South Korea
North (Inner Mongolia)	Mongolian (5,8)	Lama Buddhism	Mongolian	Mongolia

* Other cross-border ethnic minorities in Xinjiang with a kin-state are the Kyrgyz, the Tajik, the Uzbek and the Russians.

The table includes those cross-border ethnic groups whose population in China exceeds one million. The selection is derived from the cross-border ethnic groups mentioned in Jin Chunzi & Wang Jianmin eds (1994) *Zhongguo kuajing minzu* (China's Cross-border Ethnic Groups), Beijing: Minzu chubanshe. It should be noted that this classification is based on the Chinese officially approved view that there are 55 ethnic minority nationalities in China. However, the actual number of ethnic groups in China and boundary drawing between some of the groups is debatable; see e.g. Harrell 1995, 27-34. I am grateful to Prof. Juha Janhunen for the idea of compiling this table.

The figures of the populations obtained from the 2000 Population Census. National Bureau of Statistics of China (2004). Statistical Yearbook of China 2004.

<http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/yb2004-c/indexch.htm>. Otherwise the information in this table is mainly derived from an official Chinese website *China Internet Information Center* and its page "Ethnic minorities in China".

<http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/EthnicGroups/126822.htm>.

areas earlier ruled by their ancestors. Conversely, ethnic groups with historical nation-state within China might wish to separate and establish an own state. To these groups belong, for example, the Tibetans, the Uighurs and the Tai. These two types of ethnic groups can be assumed to arouse the concern of central state because of their eventual separatist tendencies.

Secondly, the level of integration and sinicization of the ethnic minorities may affect China's policies toward cross-border activities. Many of the cross-border ethnic groups speak languages other than Chinese, and some of them believe in religions unfamiliar to the Han Chinese (see Table 1).¹¹ Xinjiang and Tibet have remained culturally least sinicized as well as politically and socially least integrated in China. The percentage of ethnic minorities of the total population in these regions is 60 and 94 respectively.¹² They stand out as the most complex and challenging regions for the central state. This is not meant to mean that separatism is an inherent feature of these ethnic groups. Rather, the crux is that the central state may regard the administration of these areas as more challenging compared with other regions. As the population of Inner Mongolia is dominated by the Han Chinese, Mongolia does not pose a similar threat of separation to the central government, although a political exile community is demanding an end to "Chinese occupation of Inner-Mongolia".¹³ Only 21 per cent of the population of Inner Mongolia are ethnic Mongols. The other regions are inhabited by smaller cross-border ethnic groups of which only the Koreans and the Tai have kin-states across the border. Compared with Xinjiang, Tibet and Mongolia, Yunnan stands out as politically less complicated and demanding. There are no fears of separatist activities,¹⁴ rather the problems created by ethnic border-crossings are social: e.g. the consequences of trade in human beings and narcotics, and the spread of AIDS. With regard to political sensitivity, Yanbian can be placed somewhere between Yunnan and Xinjiang: the kin-state is located adjacent to China, pan-Korean nationalists find inspiration in the historical Kingdom

¹¹ Moreover, it should be mentioned that nowadays many of the members of minority nationalities are bilingual with fluency in both their native language and Chinese.

¹² National Bureau of Statistics of China 2001, 52. Because the large number of migrant workers and soldiers in Tibet and Xinjiang are not included in the population statistics, the actual percentage is lower.

¹³ E.g. The Inner Mongolian People's Party which is active in the US. Wurlig Borchigud has described the ups and downs of the Mongolian transnational solidarity. In the 1980s many educated Mongols in Inner Mongolia imagined a transnational Mongol community as their primary affiliation. Yet, as the links with Mongolia intensified during the 1990s, the ignorance of Mongolians about the Mongols of Inner Mongolia, and the higher development level of Inner Mongolia as compared with Mongolia, strengthened their attachment to China. Borchigub states that among many urban Mongols in Inner Mongolia, a regional Chinese identity has replaced their pan-Mongolian transnational dream. Borchigud 1995, 176-179.

¹⁴ Yunnan gong'an gaodeng zhuanke xuexiao 2003 a and b.

of Goguryeo which linked the current area of Yanbian to the Korean Peninsula, and the influence of South Korean Christianity is strong in Yanbian. Yet, the social and political integration of the Yanbian Koreans into China and shared Confucian cultural traditions make Koreans politically less challenging for the central government as compared with Xinjiang's ethnic minorities.

As the practices and policies of Yanbian will be later reflected with the two regions of Xinjiang and Yunnan, before presenting Yanbian in more detail, I will briefly discuss their process of integration into China.

Geoff Wade has highlighted two major differences between China's northern and southern borders. Firstly, until the late Qing-dynasty (1644-1911), the threats from outside had originated from the north and northwest, while China's southern regions have been areas for China's continuous expansion. Secondly, the agrarian China and the northern nomadic steppe maintained their distinctive features, whereas the differences in the predominantly agrarian south have not been as clear.¹⁵

China claims that its control of Xinjiang stretches back to 60 BC. In a government document, the Chinese rule over western frontiers is depicted as uninterrupted since 60 BC, except for a period between the Tang and Yuan-dynasties (907-1279). The western regions were formally established as a province in 1884, with the name Xinjiang, which means new territory, and belies China's claims of longstanding control over the area. To turn this term to their advantage, the government document has translated Xinjiang as "old territory returned to the motherland" (in the Chinese version *gutū xīngui*).¹⁶ Recent Western research proposes another interpretation of China's control over the area, as Millward and Perdue claim "until the eighteenth century no Chinese dynasty had continuously controlled for any length of time or governed in any thoroughgoing way the entire territory that is modern Xinjiang".¹⁷ In the eighteenth century, the Qing-dynasty faced local resistance in Xinjiang, sometimes supported by Great Britain and Russia which were involved in the "Great Game" over the dominance of

¹⁵ Wade 2000, 34.

¹⁶ The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China 2003. *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guowuyuan xinwen bangongshi* 2003.

¹⁷ Millward & Perdue 2004, 48. Their article contains a detailed and lively description of the shifting political rulers of the territory of the current day Xinjiang.

strategic Central Asian passages. More recently, there were two attempts in Xinjiang to create an independent state, an East Turkestan Republic: first in southern Xinjiang in 1933-1934 and later in western Xinjiang 1944-49. The animosities between the different ethnic groups and regions, also effectively fuelled by the Han Chinese rulers, have prevented a united strong opposition from rising. When the Communists took power, the leaders of Xinjiang submitted to them without resistance, although, it still took five years for the Communists to pacify the whole region.¹⁸ The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region was established in 1955.¹⁹

Yunnan was incorporated into China during Song and Ming dynasties and was controlled through the so called *tusi*-system where native chiefs were allowed to manage local affairs.²⁰ The control was not continuous. For example, there were large Muslim uprisings in Yunnan in the mid 1800s. Xishuangpanna, in current southern Yunnan, was a kingdom with an unbroken royal family line since 1180. A local Tai king ruled the area with its own army, but was subject to Burmese and Chinese authority. Chinese administration was established there in 1911, but the Tai king continued to exert authority over many internal matters. Although Xishuangpanna was part of a unitary area of Tai people, there were "airtight ethnic boundaries" between the different groups.²¹ Thus, the Tai in Xishuangpanna identified themselves with their own state, not with the other Tai Kingdoms. In 1940s and 1950s, after the withdrawal of the French colonial power, the Tai-inhabited areas were divided between the regional states.²² After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Communists took control of Yunnan by 1950.²³ Because the Han Chinese form the majority of the population in Yunnan, the province was not declared an autonomous region. Instead, between 1953 and 1958 in all eight autonomous prefectures were established in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities.²⁴

¹⁸ Millward & Tursun 2004, 86.

¹⁹ Five autonomous prefectures and six autonomous counties were established in Xinjiang already in 1954. Wu Shimin & Zhanbazhabu 1995, 308, 318.

²⁰ Moseley 1973, 15, 27-28.

²¹ Hsieh 1995, 304.

²² Hsieh 1995, 303-304; Hansen 2004, 55-56.

²³ Moseley 1973, 34.

²⁴ The establishment of autonomous counties was a process which continued in Yunnan into the 1990s. Wu Shimin & Zhanbazhabu 1995, 307, 314-317.

Yanbian, the Yanbian Koreans and their Korean Transnational Ethnic Links

The ethnic Koreans in Yanbian have their origins in several waves of migration from the Korean Peninsula – both voluntary and forced. The two latest large waves took place in the late 19th century, caused by crop failure and famine in the 1860s, and during the first part of the 20th century, as a result of the Japanese occupation of Korea and Northeast China. Until the late 19th century, the area was sparsely populated, because both the Qing and the Korean Joseon dynasty forbade migration to the area. Nevertheless, by the late 1860s, there were already over 100 Korean villages on the Chinese side of the Yalu-river, which bordered Korea.²⁵ Only in 1870s did the rulers of the Qing-dynasty, who were ethnic Manchus, allow non-Manchu settlement in their sacred home areas in Northeast China, in order to reinforce presence there against Russian expansion.²⁶ According to some estimates, at the beginning of the 20th century there were about 50,000 Koreans in the Jiandao area (roughly current Yanbian), their population being much larger than the Chinese population.²⁷ After Japan occupied the Korean Peninsula in 1910, more Koreans migrated to China, many in order to struggle for Korean independence.²⁸ When Japan took control of Northeast China in 1931, thousands of Koreans were transferred there to work in Japanese industrial plants and in mines. After Japan's defeat in the Second World War, many of the Korean migrants, many with children who were born in China, returned to Korea. These waves of migration created both traumatic and affectionate bonds between those Koreans who stayed in China, and those who returned to Korea.

When the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, 600,000 Koreans in all had returned to Korea while 1.1 million remained in China.²⁹ Since the Sino-North Korean border remained open, those Koreans living in China could freely move back and forth across the border. Thus, it is difficult to estimate the number of Koreans who, in the 1950s, finally decided to settle in China.³⁰ Moreover, a substantial number of the Chinese Korean soldiers

²⁵ Pease 2001, 66, refers to Nam 1989.

²⁶ Janhunen 1996, 32; Lee 2000c, 95.

²⁷ Zabrovskaia 1993, 70; Lee 2000c, 95.

²⁸ However, the vast majority of the migrants left Korea for economic reasons. Pease 2001, 69, refers to Nam 1989.

²⁹ Jin Yuanshi 1993, 66.

³⁰ Olivier 1993, 61-62

who participated in the Korean War in the ranks of the PLA remained in North Korea. Some of them participated in the reconstruction of the war-ridden country. Only in 1958 did North Korea ask the Chinese troops to withdraw, which was completed within the same year.

Border control was gradually reinforced and the movement over the border was curtailed by 1957. In the same year, the Chinese government issued a regulation on the classification of Koreans in China, thus: those ethnic Koreans residing in Northeast China were identified as members of China's Korean minority, while those who lived south of *Shanhaiguan*, the traditional division line between China-proper and the northeastern frontier regions, were classified as North Korean nationals. Further, those Koreans who earlier had gained dual Chinese – Korean citizenship, were deprived of their (North-)Korean nationality. At the same time, China started to intensify its attempts to forge a Chinese Korean Nationality.³¹

However, cross-border mobility continued to some extent. Some Chinese Koreans crossed the border in the 1960s and 1970 when North Korea was wealthier than Yanbian.³² Yet, it became difficult for Yanbian Koreans to reside in North Korea without proper entry documents because China and North Korea had signed an agreement on the repatriation of unregistered migrants.³³

Nowadays China's Korean minority numbers some two million people. Some of the first generation migrants are still alive. Most of the Chinese Koreans are settled in northeastern China, with a denser Korean population in the Yanbian prefecture of Jilin Province, near the North Korean border. Because of its denser Korean population, Yanbian was granted autonomy in 1952. Due to Korean out-migration and Chinese in-migration, currently only 38 per cent of Yanbian's population is ethnic Korean. About 80 per cent of Yanbian Koreans have their origins in North Korea and 20 per cent in South Korea.³⁴ This proportion is different in other parts of the northeast. In Heilongjiang and the northern parts of Jilin, a slight majority of the ethnic Koreans have their roots in South Korea, while in Liaoning and

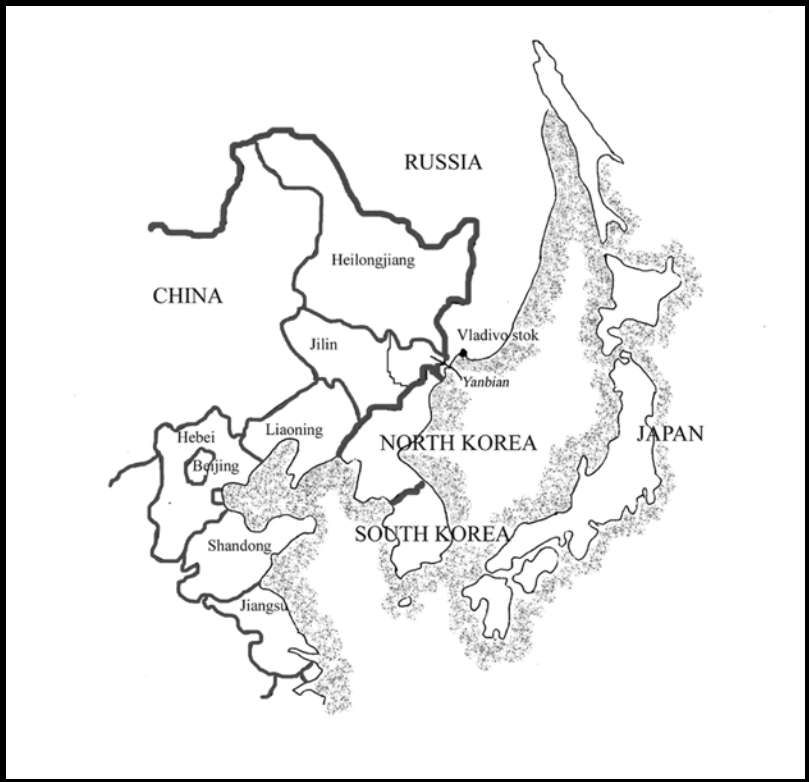
³¹ Lee 2001a, 127; Lee 2001c, 110; Olivier 1993, 61-62

³² Chen 2005, 167.

³³ Olivier 1993, 153.

³⁴ Liu Feng 1989, 330.

Map 2. Northeast Asia



Map 3. Yanbian



southern Jilin two thirds have their roots in North Korea.³⁵ This difference was reflected in their political orientation. In the 1980s, Yanbian Koreans were more reluctant to deviate from the official Chinese line favouring North Korea. In contrast, ethnic Koreans especially in Heilongjiang, were more favourably inclined toward South Korea.³⁶ Because of the different kinds of links and political traditions, the utilization of the ethnic Korea ties has probably developed in a different way there when compared with Yanbian.

Because Korean culture is strongly influenced by Chinese traditions, there have been few grievances between Korean and the Han Chinese over cultural discrepancies, except the intolerant period of Cultural Revolution. One more factor has facilitated the co-existence of Koreans and Han Chinese: a large number of the Koreans were devoted Communists. These two points place the Koreans into a special category among China's minority nationalities with regard to their integration into the Chinese state and society.

There was already an active Communist Korean movement in Northeast China before the Chinese Communists established a Manchurian branch in 1927. Yet, from the beginning the relations between these two groups were not free from frictions, partly because of different goals.³⁷ Although they both fought against the Japanese, the Koreans strove in the first place for the Korean independence, not for the Chinese cause. After the Japanese surrender in 1945, the Chinese Communist Party absorbed those ethnic Korean Communists who were loyal to China. At the same time, ethnic Koreans in China were declared a minority nationality. The Party initiated the land reform in 1946, which helped to win over the landless Korean farmers, who now gained the right to own land. After this, many Koreans were ready to enlist in the China's People's Liberation Army and participate in the Civil War.³⁸ Later, ethnic Koreans enrolled in the ranks of China's army to fight in the Korean War.³⁹ This indeed showed that the Chinese Communists had won the loyalty of ethnic Koreans. The glorious revolutionary

³⁵ Jin Yuanshi 1993, 58, 66.

³⁶ Park 1987, 25, 29.

³⁷ There prevailed a general strong anti-Korean sentiment in the 1920s because the Chinese perceived the Koreans in Manchuria as being in the forefront of the Japanese invasion of China. The frictions between the Korean and Chinese Communists escalated in a purge in 1932, where an estimated quarter of the Korean members of the Manchurian Branch of the CCP were executed by the Chinese communists, accused for being oriented toward Korea or supporting independence from China. Lee 2001b, 360; Lee 2001c, 101.

³⁸ Lee 2001c, 104-106.

³⁹ Olivier 1993, 53-57; Park 1987, 21. Olivier depicts in detail the contributions of the ethnic Koreans to the Chinese Communist cause. Olivier 1993, 31-63.

tradition of the Korean nationality is often reiterated in Chinese publications on its ethnic minorities.⁴⁰

Even though the ethnic Koreans could be depicted as an exemplary minority they still posed problems to the government. Because their origins are outside China, some Koreans in Northeast China regarded North or South Korea as their actual home country.⁴¹ It seems that first generation Koreans still regard themselves as Korean nationals. Those generations which have grown up and been educated in China tend to regard China as their home country. Still, the Chinese Koreans are very much aware of their Korean roots and can trace their Korean ancestors several generations back. Some Yanbian Koreans have obtained their family genealogies during their visits to Korea.⁴²

Although Koreans in China and overseas Chinese are comparable because neither of them lives in their ancestral homeland, the term "overseas Korean", *chaoqiao*, is not officially used in China for Chinese Koreans. Calling Chinese Koreans overseas Koreans, is prohibited in official contexts as the term, in the first place, emphasises allegiance to a foreign country. The use of this term has remained an intensely emotional and politically subtle issue. Opposing the official line, some Chinese Koreans still want to call themselves overseas Koreans.⁴³ However, at least in the vocabulary of Chinese Koreans living in Beijing, the word *chaoqiao* nowadays means South and North Korean citizens who reside in China.

Although the current Chinese Korean population mainly has its origins in these recent waves of migration, in earlier times, both Chinese and Korean kingdoms have ruled and fought over the current area of Yanbian. The dispute continues even today, among historians and politicians. Both South Korea and China claim historical antecedence with respect to the Kingdoms of Gaoguli (Chin.) /Goguryeo [Koguryŏ] (Korean) and Bohai (Chin.) /Balhae (Korean) which ruled over the area in 37 BC – 926 AD. Another historical dispute concerns the region of Jiandao (Chin.) /Gando (Korean), which is roughly congruent with the current-

⁴⁰ See, e.g. the description of the Korean nationality in the book on China's ethnic minorities Tian Xiaoxiu main ed. (1991). *Zhonghua minzu*, 95; and a handbook of ethnic minority work in Jilin Zhu Zaixian & Yin Hongpeng eds (1993), *Jilinheng minzu gongzuo shouce*, 184, 186.

⁴¹ Jin Zhongguo 1994a, 234.

⁴² Jin Zhongguo 1994a, 230.

⁴³ Lee 1986, 162.

day Yanbian. Japan, which had made Korea into a protectorate in 1905, agreed in a convention with China (1909), that Jiandao would be a part of China, but attained the right to govern the Korean population in the area. In return for recognizing Chinese sovereignty over the area, Japan gained rights to build roads and develop mining in Northeast China. In the same Treaty, Japan and China agreed that the Sino-Korean border went along the Tumen River.⁴⁴ Today, Korean nationalists demand that the Treaty should be nullified, and Jiandao, which they regard as a part of Korea, should be incorporated into Korea. On their side, Chinese officials have asked Seoul not to make Yanbian a territorial issue.⁴⁵ These historical disputes add to the political sensitivity of Yanbian.

Chinese Koreans have gained a position which they are proud of. Their average level of education has ranked as the highest in China, even exceeding the Han Chinese. A considerable number of Koreans work in local administration and many have reached prominent positions at the national level. Reasons for these can be found in the Korean Confucian traditions which emphasise the importance of education and respect a career in the government. In 1952, 74 per cent of Yanbian cadres were ethnic Koreans. By 1995, this percentage had fallen to 42 per cent, partially accounted for by the increasing number of Han Chinese residents in Yanbian. Still, this figure exceeds the percentage of Koreans of the whole population of Yanbian. About 70 percent of these cadres worked in the fields of research, culture, education, and media.⁴⁶ Most of my interviewees in the local administration were ethnic Koreans. Yet, only few Koreans seem to work in the administration of foreign economic cooperation. According to some academic informants, the traditional disdain for trade among Koreans no longer caused this disparity. For example about half of the students of economics and business administration at the local universities were Koreans. These young Koreans were just not interested in a career in Yanbian, but looked for employment in South Korean companies in coastal regions or abroad.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Zabrovskaja 1993, 74.

⁴⁵ The Seoul Times 12 May 2006; Professor Park Kwan-Sup stated in his article "A Historical and Geographical Study of Manchuria and Chientao, Lost Land of Korea" that the large Korean emigration made Manchuria an indispensable part of Korea and that Jiandao [Chientao] should be recovered as an outpost of Korea for its continental advancement. Park 1987, 3. His statements can be assumed to reflect the general ideas and ambitions of the pan-Korean activists; Incidentally, during my short stay in Seoul in 2003, I was informed by a taxi driver that according to the popular opinion in South Korea, Yanbian is a legitimate part of Korea.

⁴⁶ Jin Zhongguo 1999a, 89.

⁴⁷ Discussions at the University, Yanbian 2005.

Yanbian has two kinds of pools of Korean resources abroad: foreign Koreans and Chinese Koreans with Chinese citizenship. Foreign Koreans include, from a Chinese point of view, Koreans living on the Korean Peninsula and the some 3.7 million Koreans who reside elsewhere in the world, mainly in the United States, Japan, and the area of the former Soviet Union.⁴⁸ Foreign Koreans can be divided into three overlapping categories with regard to the basis on which the relationship with Yanbian can be constructed. The first group contains foreign Koreans with relatives and acquaintances in Yanbian. According to Korean traditions, blood relatives up to the eighth degree of kinship are regarded as members of the family.⁴⁹ A more specific group includes Koreans with life histories linked to Yanbian. These foreign Koreans, or their parents, were born or have lived part of their life in Northeast China. Many of the Koreans who left China after the end of Japanese Occupation in 1945 have affectionate bonds with the region where they, or their parents, lived and participated in the struggle for Korean independence. However, compared with the overseas Chinese, their ties with China are thinner, because their ancestral home place is on the Korean Peninsula. Yanbian provided only a temporary home for them. The third, and widest category embraces all foreign Koreans, whose sympathy and interest in Yanbian can be evoked with regard to "blood ties", ethnicity, and culture.

To conclude, Yanbian had several special characteristics when compared with the other autonomous areas in China. It had links with not only one kin-state but two. In addition, the relations to these two countries were deeply politicized. The triangular relationship with North and South Korea made the opening up of Yanbian a politically delicate process. Moreover, links with a wealthy kin-state were uncommon among the ethnic minority regions. Further, the particular features of the Korean minority also put Yanbian into a different category. Because the Koreans were well integrated into the Chinese political and social system, and besides had a high standard of education, they were in a better position to participate in local politics and get their voices heard. Although there are clear differences to other autonomous areas, I find it possible to draw general conclusions from this case study.

⁴⁸ Choi 2003, 18.

⁴⁹ Kim Rak [1995] 1996, 219-221. The eighth degree refers to the great-grandchildren of great-grandfather's brothers.

Nevertheless, the Party-state system covers all the autonomous areas with a common general set of structures, policies and development goals.

Defining the Approach: Transnational Ethnic Capital Transfers in China

How to study this set of transnational relations and their utilization for local economic benefit? Recent studies on migration benefit and transnational ethnic entrepreneurship tender partial support, but the problem is that they do not provide a coherent methodological and conceptual framework for a study in economic mobilization of transnational ethnic communities. Studies either focus on the recent labour migration or established diasporas. The second problem is that the academic field of transnational migration studies still is evolving and has considerable difficulties in grasping the mobility of current-day migrants. Contemporary migration is both temporary and circular to its character and there has not yet been any serious efforts to capture the nodes for resource mobilization in this circuit.

Here, I will make a preliminary attempt to widen the approach to the study of resource mobilization from a transnational ethnic community. My aim is to combine earlier research results from both diaspora studies and studies related to migration benefit. At the same time, I aim to pay attention to the current processes of transnationalism and its effects on migration and return.

Transnational Ethnic Social Capital

Pioneers in the field of transnationalism, Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, have defined transnationalism in their studies of contemporary migrants. I find this definition useful to describe migrant communities of earlier origin, too, if they frequently employ multiple cross-border relationships.

"We define 'transnationalism' as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. ... Immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships -

*familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political - that span borders we call 'transmigrants'!*⁵⁰

This definition places emphasis on the variety of the relationships and also the close connections which link together the societies of origin and settlement. The term *transnational* infers that in a globalized world, social relations and ethnic identities transcend beyond the spheres of nation-states. Yet, they do not emerge and develop intact independent of nation-states and local contexts. As the American sociologist Luis Eduardo Guarnizo has suggested, "...transnational practices and relationships are embedded in and simultaneously affect historically and geographically specific socio-political and spatial hierarchies and contexts".⁵¹ Thus, while the transnational ties are constructed and sustained in localities of nation-states, the ties that emerge transcend beyond nation-states. In order to bring the study of transnational ties away from the conceptual realm of state and nation to the localities where these ties are created and maintained, a parallel term "translocal" has been taken into use. This term not only puts emphasis on the local character of those ties, but also takes into account the links between places. Acknowledging the importance of locality, in the introduction to the edited volume "Transnationalism from Below", Guarnizo and Smith called for studies in the "translocal micro-production" of transnational ties.⁵²

While this study bears aspects of a translocal study, I still prefer the term transnational for two reasons. Firstly, while Yanbian can be conceptualized as a "translocality", the counterpart of the Yanbianese transnational activities is a ill-defined worldwide South Korea-based ethnic community which is difficult to define as a locality. Secondly, while the official local attempts to promote ethnic transnationalism in Yanbian were strongly influenced by the state-politics and Chinese nation-building, I find it relevant to keep the state and nation in the vocabulary.

Relationships which span over national boundaries are, of course, nothing new. People have already been able to keep in touch with distant relatives and friends by letter and international

⁵⁰ Basch et al [1994] 1997, 7.

⁵¹ Guarnizo 2003, 690.

⁵² Guarnizo & Smith [1998] 1999, 12-13, 26. In my view, the term "interlocal" would be clearer than "translocal", because here it is question about ties *between* two localities, not *beyond* a locality.

travel for centuries. However, what is novel and characteristic is the intensity and multiplicity of the cross-border activities.

The leading figures in the study of transnational migration, Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt have proposed that migrants engaged in transnational exchanges and reciprocity, create transnational communities.⁵³ The German political scientist Thomas Faist has further refined this definition from the basis of his studies on Turks in Germany. He states that transnational webs of ties and their contents create social spaces which can, according to the density of ties, be divided into three forms: small transnational kinship groups, transnational exchange in circuits, and transnational communities bound together by a diffuse solidarity. *Transnational kinship groups* represent migrants whose main commitment is to the family, located in two or several countries. Transnational kinship groups do not necessarily have strong tie to a wider transnational community which extends beyond the family. *Transnational circuits* are characterized by a constant circulation of goods, people, and information, with trading networks as a basic example. *Transnational communities* are bound together by a high level of social cohesion and common repertoire of symbolic ties, like ethnicity or nationality. Here diasporas, created through traumatic dispersion, provide a central example.⁵⁴ Thus, compared with Portes and his colleagues, Faist maintains that labour migrants create transnational communities only when their sense of solidarity reaches beyond narrow kinship ties. Developing his argument further, Faist maintains that these three forms may well be consecutive, transnational kinship groups gradually developing into transnational communities. Another difference is that Faist also sees "stayers", i.e. those who did not migrate, as a part of the transnational community.⁵⁵

Faist elaborates further three elements, which constitute important structures of transnational social spaces. He emphasizes *social and symbolic ties* which in turn contain *social capital*.

Social and symbolic ties both refer to ties to which participants attach shared meanings. Unlike social ties, symbolic ties are not necessarily based on earlier transactions and can even be mobilized in the absence of earlier direct contacts, based on the presumed commonalities

⁵³ Portes et al 1999, 217.

⁵⁴ Faist 2000, 202-210.

⁵⁵ Faist 2000, 207, 214.

of the participants. Symbolic ties can unfold further than direct relations, encompassing members of the same religious beliefs, language, ethnic or national group. Faist maintains that symbolic ties grow stronger if they contain social or political meanings.⁵⁶

In order to better understand the role of these ties in facilitating cooperation, Faist looks closer at their contents, and distinguishes three mechanisms: obligations, reciprocity and solidarity. For this work, the term diffuse solidarity is of particular interest. Diffuse solidarity, contrary to focused solidarity, relates to solidarity within larger entities such as territorial and symbolic communities in which participants largely lack face-to-face contact.⁵⁷ Thus, symbolic ties can be also evoked with reference to a certain locality, a community formed by historical events such as nationalistic movement, or even general notions of a common ethnic background.

Social and symbolic ties in turn carry social capital. In Faist's terms, social capital is a collective resource embedded in social and symbolic ties. The term social capital has emerged as a parallel term to economic and human capital referring to the resources embedded in social ties which can produce profit. Human capital refers to skills, ideas and attitudes, which people can acquire through training and work experience. Combining the definitions provided by Bourdieu and Putnam, Faist defines social capital as

"those resources that help people or groups to achieve their goals in ties and the assets inherent in patterned social and symbolic ties that allow actors to cooperate in networks and organizations, serving as a mechanism to integrate groups and symbolic communities".⁵⁸

Thus he gives social capital two important meanings. Firstly, it helps to *facilitate cooperation and integrate groups*. Secondly, it refers to *resources* which can be drawn from the social and symbolic ties: access to resources of others, improved information, control and authority. The specific benefits of social capital can for example include information on jobs, housing, and business opportunities.

⁵⁶ Faist 2000, 101, 102, 110.

⁵⁷ Faist 2000, 106, 109.

⁵⁸ Faist 2000, 102.

Thus, transnational social spaces are held together by social and symbolic bonds which contain social capital. Social capital is useful to develop economic activities as it helps to overcome problems in cooperation and provides a vast array of resources. Since social capital can be evoked by referring to general ethnic or cultural symbolic ties based on diffuse solidarity, it is a useful tool in various economic pursuits.

The American Chinese sociologist, Xiangming Chen, has paid attention to the fluctuating strength of social capital. Taking the Asia-Pacific region as an example, he stresses that ethnic social capital is created and sustained in stages by previous and present migration circuits. However, he maintains that the integrating effect of a common transnational ethnicity and culture "varies according to the actual social networks that are created or modified by ethnic and cultural identity changes". Alternatively, he also notes that the ethnic and cultural ties in the region have also periodically "weakened by competing political ideologies, military conflicts and economic inconsistencies" between different countries in the region.⁵⁹ Drawing on Chen, I find it important to stress the historical accumulation of social capital through different stages of migration, up to current day migration. It is also important to acknowledge that the strength of the ethnic and cultural ties is influenced by outside factors which may equally reinforce as well as sever them at times.

The evolving nature of the ethnic and cultural ties has been recognized by other scholars, too. Alan Smart, who studied Chinese transnational entrepreneurs, approached the issue of social capital from the angle of culture. He agrees that symbolic ties provide important resources to surmount problems in cooperation. Culture, seen as fluid and undetermined, provides a flexible basis to create trustworthy relationships particularly in an insecure business environment. He further emphasized that it is exactly the "fuzziness" of culture which makes it a useful resource.⁶⁰ The type of ethnic ties which are described in Alan and Josephine Smart's studies, have been referred to as *constructed "transnational Chineseness"* or *situated ethnicity*.⁶¹ Both of these terms emphasise how cultural commonalities have been constructed to meet the specific needs of a certain situation.

⁵⁹ Chen 2000, 45, 46.

⁶⁰ Smart 1999, 178.

⁶¹ Guarnizo & Smith 1999, 22.

In a similar way to culture, another adhesive of transnational communities, ethnic and cultural identities, are also not fixed but fluid. Drawing from James Clifford, Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini have stated that ethnic and cultural identities are products of politics rather than inheritance, and thus they delineate identities as based on mobility rather than locality, and moulded, for example, by nostalgic imaginaries and transnational subjectivities.⁶² Thus, the cultural and ethnic commonalities, which provide shared meanings for the members of transnational communities, are flexible and mouldable. But then, in addition, they can be manipulated by their members as well as other powerful actors, such as states.⁶³

Yet, the mobilization of social capital does not always produce beneficial consequences. Thireau and Hua have described how some overseas Chinese businessmen have begun to regard kinship ties rather as harmful to the economic interests. For example, in their home towns, local officials and vast networks of relatives have asked for financial contributions which they could not afford.⁶⁴ The positive social capital which in some cases helped to overcome difficulties, turned sour.

As such, transnational social ties have been described both in favourable and negative terms. Yet, Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini have pointed out, that although the accelerating globalization and, in particular, increasing global mobility have provided transnational communities with opportunities for better living standards and contributed to economic growth, "economic gains are underwritten by the emergence of gross disparities in economic, social and spatial powers". The exploitation of Chinese migrant workers in factories owned by overseas Chinese provides only one example of this. They conclude that; "there is nothing intrinsically liberating in diasporic cultures".⁶⁵ Thus, to use the term proposed by the sociologist Alejandro Portes, transnational social ties also contain *negative capital*,⁶⁶ which may impede rather than support, economic cooperation and subjugate its weaker members into exploitation.

⁶² Ong & Nonini 1997, 327.

⁶³ Ong 1997, 173.

⁶⁴ Thireau & Hua 1999, 196-200.

⁶⁵ Ong & Nonini 1997, 325.

⁶⁶ Portes 1998, 16.

Playing upon the assumed ethnic and cultural commonalities within a transnational community has been part of economic development policies in many countries. Thus, the nature of the common ties is not only a question of ethnicity and culture *per se*, but also a political act which aims to facilitate economic cooperation. As Leo Douw, a historian specializing in Chinese transnational entrepreneurship, puts it: "particularly in the case of business relations, ethnic appeals are principally of political character, designed to accommodate conflicting interests between officials and expatriates of different nationalities."⁶⁷ Thus, the next section will focus on the state-led attempts to draw benefit from transnational social capital.

State-supported Transnationalism "from Above"

Transnational communities do not emerge by themselves, but are formed by their members through active participation. These activities can take place on both high and low level of institutionalization. Several researchers have used the descriptions transnationalism "from above" and "from below" to distinguish between these different institutional levels of transnationalism. Portes and his colleagues identify multinational companies and state representatives as examples of powerful institutional actors which function on a highly institutionalized level, while the grassroots initiatives of migrants are given as one example for activities on a low level of institutionalization.⁶⁸ Furthermore, researchers have proposed that transnationalism "from above" is characterized by hegemonic attempts of the elite to perpetuate their power, while transnationalism from below should include resistance against some prevailing feature of the status quo. Conversely, for example, Sarah J. Mahler has highlighted that it is difficult and even artificial to distinguish between transnationalism from above and below, because they are interrelated.⁶⁹

A transnational community can emerge as an initiative of its members, but it can also receive critical support for example from governments. Thus, for methodological clarity, it is important to distinguish between the *actors* and the *supporters* or *activators* on a high level of

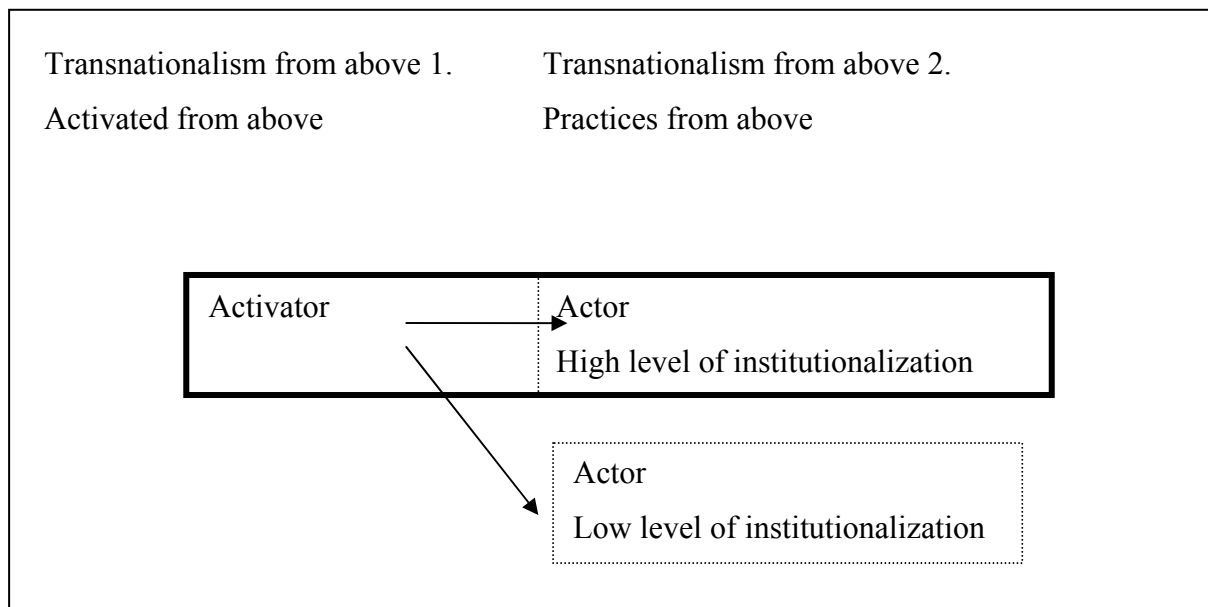
⁶⁷ Douw 2000, 6.

⁶⁸ Portes et al 1999, 221-223; Mahler 1999, 66-73.

⁶⁹ Mahler 1999, 66-73, 90-91.

institutionalization.⁷⁰ As such, I suggest that transnationalism from above may refer to two different types of participants in transnationalism. It may describe, firstly, actors on a high level of institutionalization, such as companies or associations established by the elite, and secondly, powerful activators or supporters of transnationalism who seek to manipulate the transnational actors for their own purpose but without necessarily participating in the activities themselves. The activities which they seek to mobilize, may extend from the grassroots level to a high level of institutionalization. What these two groups have in common is a high level of institutionalization and the purpose to maintain their power positions. However, it is presumably difficult to precisely differentiate between both activators and actors in every case, since these will most likely often be intertwined.

Figure 1. Two Types of Transnationalism from Above



Within an ethnic transnational community, constructing ethnic and cultural appeals from above is problematic. Portes has pointed out that after transnational economic activities have emerged, subsequent activities often encompass political, social, and cultural pursuits as well. In addition to ordinary people, even churches, artists and political parties may join the

⁷⁰ "Activators" at the low level of institutionalization could include e.g. community leaders who mobilize transnational ties of the members of the community.

movement.⁷¹ This poses a difficult problem for the governmental sponsor of transnational ethnic economic activities: i.e. how to maximize the economic benefit of transnational activities while still minimizing the eventual destabilization impact of divergent loyalties.

A major challenge faced by governments is how to evoke a feeling of togetherness from above in a credible way so that the eventual emergent loyalties still embrace the state? Among overseas Chinese, China has played up the presumed connection between home town loyalty and patriotism. However, as Alan and Josephine Smart have pointed out, a desire to help develop your native place and to provide opportunities for relatives can still coexist with strong feelings of distrust and antipathy for the Chinese Communist Party.⁷² Furthermore, research findings by Mette Thunø have shown how the revival of cultural practices has provoked fears of ethnic nativism in China's coastal provinces. For example, strong lineage institutions have been suspected to defy the central leadership of the Communist Party there.⁷³ Although these tendencies have aroused concern, the Chinese state has continued to demonstrate compliance to the flexible practices of cultural and legal citizenship of the overseas Chinese. Yet, with regard to the ethnic and national identity of the Chinese who remain in the mainland, the Chinese leadership has been more concerned. This especially applies to ethnic minorities whom the state singles out as localized and dependent subjects of the Chinese nation.⁷⁴ It can be assumed, that the Chinese uptake shows particular concern for the eventual shifting ethnic and national loyalties, when it promotes a sense of togetherness within transnational ethnic communities, of which its ethnic minorities are members.

Transnational Ethnic Capital Transfers

Transnational activities have been categorized into three types: economic, political, and socio-cultural, all of which are strongly intertwined. Political and socio-cultural activities can be used to promote economic development, for example, local governments may arrange cultural

⁷¹ Portes 1997, 3-4, 15-16.

⁷² Smart & Smart 1999, 109.

⁷³ Thunø 2001, 927-928.

⁷⁴ Ong 1997, 173; Barabantseva 2005, 206.

events or pay official visits in order to attract investors. Conversely, economic activities often pave the way for political and cultural endeavours.⁷⁵

Traditional studies on migrants' transnational economic activities have focused on three themes: financial remittances, transnational entrepreneurship, and community development support. This typology is applicable to studies on both new and older migrants. Scholars on economic endeavours of contemporary labour migrants as well as older overseas diaspora communities mainly examine remittances, investments and donations. However, recent studies have noted two important limitations in conventional studies. Firstly, in addition to economic capital transferred through transnational ties, new social and human capital has also been documented to have had an important effect on local economic development. Moreover, Luis Eduardo Guarnizo has established that economic activities generated by migration and "transnational living" have complex and significant economic consequences both for the migrant sending and receiving areas. He proposes that an inquiry into the multidirectional and multilevel actions which emerge as a consequence of migrants' desire to "lead a life that straddles across national borders" would importantly increase our understanding of the economic effects of migration.⁷⁶ This approach would expand the scope of migrants' transnational economic activities to the maintenance of transnational ties through telecommunications and travel, and also the maintenance of the cultural practises of the home region through the consumption of all matters national.

Guarnizo has also called for a new approach to the migrants' economic role in their home areas. Drawing from empirical research on transnational entrepreneurship, he concludes that migrants commonly participate in their home town businesses even while abroad. Thus, contrary to earlier beliefs, transnational migrants may well engage in business in the home locality without permanently returning. Migrants may also support the development of their home regions through various community development projects arranged by "home town associations". While abroad, migrants can also transfer social and human capital to the home community through communication and visits.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Portes 1997, 3-4, 15-16.

⁷⁶ Guarnizo 2003, 680.

⁷⁷ Guarnizo 2003, 676-677.

When looked from the point of local government, transnational communities thus provide a large pool of development resources: investments, which often include new technologies, community aid, remittances, human and social capital and wider economic activities generated by "transnational living". How to approach such a wide range of resources? British migration researchers, Savina Ammassari and Richard Black, have proposed that focusing on capital transfers would provide a clear way to look at the specific impacts of migration on development. They suggest studies on transfers of *financial, human and social capital*, to analyse what beneficial impacts migration might include. However, they accept that capital transfers are often difficult to define and measure.

In their work, Ammassari and Black have focused on current day migrants. However, ethnic transnational communities born through earlier waves of migration can also provide similar resources as current migrants, which can be illustrated by the overseas Chinese and Indian communities which have provided financial, human and social capital for their countries of origin. Recognizing the similarities between old and new migrant communities, I have made an attempt to develop Ammassari and Black's approach to cover ethnic transnational communities in large.

If we first look at the table (Table 2 on the next page), in which Ammassari and Black have divided migration into three different phases: migration, return and transnationalism. Transnationalism in their study notes migrants' decisions not to return permanently but to move back and forth. In their typology, migrants and returnees are differentiated from transnationalism. However, in my approach, they all belong to a transnational community and may equally participate in transnational economic activities. Thus, I find it is relevant to set aside the separation between returnees, "stayers", migrants and other members of the transnational community abroad, and approach them methodologically as one entity. Furthermore, I have expanded their table with the different types of transnational economic activities as provided in Guarnizo's heuristic table. His heuristic typology of transnational economic activities provides a detailed classification of the agents, exchanges, benefits, rationale and indicators of transnational economic activities.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Guarnizo 2003, 681.

Table 2. Key Areas of Potential Capital Transfers According to Ammassari and Black⁷⁹

	Migration	Return	Transnationalism
Financial capital	cost of migration balanced by remittance of earnings	cost of return and loss of earnings balanced by transfer of savings	transfer of savings with opportunity to renew earnings
Human capital	Loss of educated individuals, but reduction of intellectual unemployment	Return of skilled individuals but risk of obsolescence or inapplicability of skills.	Potential for on-going skills transfer.
Social capital	Expansion of social networks transfers social capital in both directions.	Risk of obsolescence of social capital	Potential for renewed generation and transfer of social capital.

Source: "Harnessing migration potential for development. Examples from West Africa", in *Sussex migration briefing*, July 2002, no 1, page 2, <http://www.gapresearch.org/production/TR01.pdf>.

Thus, building upon the tables given by Black and Ammassari and Guarnizo, I have constructed a typological table on "Capital transfers within an ethnic transnational community" (see Table 3 on the next page.). This table separates the various capital transfers within a transnational ethnic community from the perspective of one location, and it delineates both positive and negative capital transfers. In this way, it specifies the focal points of capital transfers as either beneficial or detrimental to economic development. This typology may then be used as a tool to locate and analyse different resources which can be transferred within a transnational community. In this table I have chosen to use the term "economic capital" rather than financial or monetary to also include to this category non-monetary material transfers such as machinery, which yet can be considered to have a specific monetary value.

⁷⁹ The table is included in an article published in the Sussex migration briefing. However, no information on the author of the article or the compiler of the table is given. As the article contains a suggestion of further reading referring to an article by Black and Ammassari, and the referred article containing equivalent information about capital transfers, I have credited the table to them. The referred article contains a vast review of research literature on migration benefit, drawing on evidence from different parts of world. The table is purportedly based on that part of the article. Ammassari, S. & Black, R. (2001). *Harnessing the Potential of Migration and Return to Promote Development: Applying concepts to West Africa*, IOM Migration Research Series 5, Geneva: International Organization for Migration.

Table 3. Economic Capital Transfers within an Ethnic Transnational Community

Type of capital	Type of transfer	Positive examples	Negative examples
Social Capital Transfer	+ new social networks + new capability to create and maintain networks	+ new contacts to business people, educational institutes, NGO's, government officials, politicians, + "people's diplomacy" activities to create contacts with business people, educational institutes, government officials, politicians	- unofficial business networks weaken the position of government controlled business
Human Capital Transfer	+ skills + knowledge	+ new skills and knowledge in technology or management transferred while visiting home or at return + reciprocal visits by experts in educational exchange programmes + business seminars	- loss of skilled workers through migration
Economic Capital Transfer	+ savings + remittances + family investments + business investments + technology transfers as a part of investments + profit from trade + donations, both financial and material	+ investments in e.g. housing or education + returnee entrepreneurship + investments in business + financial or technological contributions to local projects + financial or material donations to local schools + better living standard reduces discontent with the local government and increases loyalty towards home country + investments create jobs	- migration costs - monetary losses caused by fraud connected to migration - unsuccessful transfer of technologies caused by a development gap between the source and target region.

How to construct a study on capital transfers? According to different types of capital, agents or something else? Although economic, human and social capital are specified here as separate units of analysis, in reality, they are intertwined. For example, foreign investments often include transfers of human capital in the form of training, and business cooperation generates larger social networks. Thus, it is not feasible to divide this study into three sections based on the different types of capital. The division between the agents is equally unclear. New migrants may choose to return or to stay abroad, so nor is a focus on agents a perfect solution either. Since this study is to explore development policies with regard to transnational capital transfers, it naturally follows to choose fields of policies as the starting

point. In this way, the study will be divided according to the types of 1) labour migration policies and 2) foreign economic cooperation policies, within the framework provided by the tradition of overseas Chinese work.

A third type of ethnic transnational capital transfers occurs through tourism, but this aspect falls outside the remit of this study due to time and resource constraints.

Thus, how to approach the development policies? What pointers does previous research provide about the impact of capital transfers into local economies, and what is the role of local governments in the process?

Figures on global financial capital transfers make impressive reading. In respect of the total amount of remittances received in 2005, India leads with USD 21.7 billion, followed by China (USD 21.3 billion) and Mexico (USD 18.2 billion). As a percentage of a the country's GDP, remittances are the highest in the African Tonga, reaching 31 percent and second highest in the European Moldova, at 27.1 per cent. These figures only present remittances sent through official channels and do not include transferences through other means. Notably, the total amount of registered remittances received by developing countries exceeds the development aid received.⁸⁰

The foreign investments made by migrant communities into their countries of origin are equally remarkable. For example, during the years between 1979 and 1993, the overseas Chinese community was responsible for some 80 per cent of the total investments in China, in all worth some USD 44 billion.⁸¹In the early years of the 21st century, the total amount of overseas Chinese investments was estimated to be USD 60 billion. Another example from Asia is India, which has attracted approximately one billion USD diaspora investments.⁸²

Nevertheless, researchers still hold divided views on whether migration and investments ultimately support development. Perhaps, instead of pondering whether migration and foreign investments promote development, or not, Bimal Ghosh, a well-established expert in

⁸⁰ The World Bank 16 November 2005.

⁸¹ *The Economist* 27 November 1993.

⁸² *The New York Times* 12 January 2003.

migration and development questions should be followed, and enquire under which conditions they are expected to bring benefit?⁸³ Based on previous research, it is possible to summarize that the determinants for successful capital transfers seem to be similar, both with regard to new migrants and older diasporas.⁸⁴ The similarities found in the patterns of successful transfers of capital from migrant and larger ethnic transnational communities, confirm the relevance of the wider approach taken in this study, viz:

1. the characteristics (orientation, level of education, legal status, etc.) of the transnational ethnic community.
2. the appropriateness of the available capital for the local conditions (level of technology, skills etc).
3. the local conditions
4. the local policies
5. the availability of social capital as a facilitator of capital transfers and/or as a resource

Local policies which are related to capital transfers have been mentioned as one of the significant factors which facilitate or impede capital transfers, but remain still just one among others. Thus, the possibilities of the local administration to promote development through transnational capital transfers, have to be analyzed within a broad context.

I have structured the study of these policies according to the main questions researchers have raised as most central, viz: how to, first support the acquisition of transnational capital, and then, how to successfully transfer that capital. In my first case, the “overseas Chinese work” – type of activities, the analysis will concentrate on the transfer of the capital. The reason for this is that in the sphere of the traditional overseas Chinese work, the Yanbian officials were mainly interested in mobilizing the capital of the foreign Koreans, and not the Yanbian Korean “new migrants”. While the Yanbian administration did not have the capacity to expand the capital of the foreign Koreans, there are not many activities to be studied. As to labour migration, the local administration launched various practises to increase migrants’

⁸³ Ghosh 1992.

⁸⁴ Luova 2005, 29. This summary is based on a review of the recent literature on transnational capital transfers e.g. Ammasari & Black 2001, Asian Development Bank 2004, Carling 2005, Ghosh 1992 & 2000, King 2000, Taylor 1999.

abilities to acquire a larger amount of capital. Thus, that chapter shall contain an analysis of both the acquisition and the transfer of capital.

The Rationale of Local Level Officials in China's Border Regions to Manage Transnational Capital Transfers

Transnational economic activities do not take place in a vacuum but they are shaped by regional, national, and local factors. In contemporary China, economic activities are subordinated to national politics. Local level officials cannot develop the local economy according to their own schemes but are confined to the development plans compiled at the national level. These plans, which set up the focus of activities and specific targets for them, penetrate down to the village level. Thus, each local level unit of government has agreed upon economic targets, such as the value of foreign trade or the volume of labour export. The decision of local level cadres to become involved in transnational ethnic practices depends on the estimation of their utility for the fulfilment of the current goals. In addition to the development plans, "crucial central policies"⁸⁵ issued by the Party and government authorities also bind local level officials. For this reason, it is important to place the capital transfers into the context of state-sanctioned development plans, central policies and the local administrative praxis in China.

The economic and social development plans for ten and five years created a general framework for the activities of administration, state-owned companies and other state-related units in China, and defined the key areas of economic and social development for the given period. The general state-level plans also determined the pace of "opening up" and the direction of economic development of each region in China.

These plans were drafted by the National Party Congresses of the Communist Party and approved by the National People's Congress. The Party Congresses, which convene every five years, also defined policy directions which affected economic activities in China, for example, such policies as the decision in 1997 to restructure the state-owned enterprises, and in 2002 to

⁸⁵ A term used by Yang Zhong on the most important policies passed down from the party and governmental authorities. Zhong 2003, 130-131. I am grateful to Eevamaria Mielonen for recommending this book to me.

focus on the attainment of a moderately well off society (*xiaokang shehui*). These policies were integrated into the five year plans and detailed regulations of their implementation were passed down in the form of political circulars.⁸⁶

A basic policy framework was created by the general five-year plan for economic and social development, which was to some extent flexible, e.g. it was revised at least once during the period.⁸⁷ Each unit under the State Council compiled its own five-year plan which would be consistent with the goals of the general plan. Furthermore, lower level units of administration drafted their own five-year plans, which were broken down into annual plans. All these plans set up targets, which the responsible officials for each administrative level and sector, were accountable for. In the early 1990s, these targets were linked to a political contract system. Leading Party and government officials signed a contract (*gangwei mubiao zerenshu*) in which targets were laid out for policy fulfilment and performance evaluation at the year's end. The targets had an internal hierarchy, and three issues were prioritized above others: social and political stability, economic development, and population control. These were so called bottom line targets (*yipiao fojue*). If these targets were not met, success in other fields would still not help in the evaluation of a cadre's work achievements.⁸⁸ The responsible leaders could lose any bonuses, or their promotion be postponed; conversely, if targets were exceeded, extra rewards could be expected. In border regions inhabited by ethnic minorities, the demand for social and political stability was presumably elevated when compared to the other regions.

Thus, this system partially motivated cadres to work for the fulfilment of the targets set. However, since the careers of the cadres were at stake, this practise would also encourage deliberately false reports and number fabrication.⁸⁹ Further, the system may also have depressed their activities, e.g. if the targets were easily met, cadres would not see any benefit to exceed the quotas, and then rather focused their energies on other targets which were harder to achieve.

⁸⁶ These circulars include for example "decisions" (*jueding*), "stipulations" (*guiding*), "clauses" (*tiaowen*), and "notice" (*tongzhi*). In addition to development plans and crucial policies, also "guideline issues" were passed down to local levels of administration. However, these were vaguely formulated general guidelines and local officials had discretion to implement them according to local circumstances. Often, local officials only paid lip service to these issues, by holding formal meetings. Zhong 2003, 131, 137-138.

⁸⁷ Interview 5, Yanbian 2005.

⁸⁸ Zhong 2003, 132, 139-140; Edin 2000, 130-131, 147; Interviews 6, 9 and 14, Yanbian 2004

⁸⁹ Zhong 2003, 143.

Within the confines of the five-year plans, for example the Ministry of Commerce set every year a target for foreign direct investments, trade and labour export. These targets were divided up among provinces and subsequently among lower levels of administration, even down to the local government-affiliated companies. At the local level, the definition of the annual targets, was in general, a two way process. Lower level units could make suggestions about their targets based on their own estimations about their capabilities.⁹⁰

Thus, the priorities and goals of local level officials were determined by the overall political and administrative framework. Their choice to take initiatives, launch activities, and allocate resources, depended on whether or not these measures were regarded as supportive to the eventual attainment of the state-sanctioned targets. Economic, human and social transnational capital transfers could have both negative and positive influence on the key issues of local plans. I could claim, that in some cases the management of transnational capital transfers could be, in the first place, important in order to maintain social and political stability, not because of their impact on economic development.

In 2006, the terminology and functions of the planning system changed. The name of the main document was changed from a development plan (*jihua*) to a development program (*guihua*). This amendment reflected the fact that compared with the previous decades, a major part of economic activities now occurred outside the direct control of the state, and the state cannot plan the activities of the private entrepreneurs. Also, the economic and societal changes are so rapid, that it became difficult to draw up and project detailed five-year plans. In some sense these programmes now resemble the government platforms which outline the central objectives of Western countries' governments.

Although the Communist Party of China lies behind the central political decisions from national level down to the village, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter, so far, the Party has only been briefly referred to. This arises, because the focus of this study is the policies *and* their realization, and more attention is given to the activities of the government units, since these are the main implementation organs. Nevertheless, it should be borne in

⁹⁰ Interview 19, Yanbian 2004.

mind throughout, that while examining the conduct of the local government, it is also examination of the politics sanctioned and/or approved by the Party.

Methodology and Material

This study is constructed as a case-study where methods of historiography are used. Concepts borrowed from the social sciences, as discussed previously in this chapter, are used in this study as analytical tools. This set of methods has been influenced by the author's education in general history (humanities) and later contemporary political history (social sciences) and East Asian Studies, which background and approach I propose is appropriate and productive for this study. The methods of historiography allow a usage of a vast array of materials which is necessary for an exploratory study of a new issue. Training in contemporary political history with currents of social sciences provides practical tools for an analysis of political and socio-economic developments. A personal interest in development questions, combined with development studies as a subsidiary subject, has determined the approach adopted. The methods and materials used follow in more detail.

According to Robert K. Yin, an in-depth case-study method is justified when the objective of the research is to identify processes behind phenomena which are, as yet, not well understood. A study with only one single case, as compared with multiple-case studies, is appropriate under three circumstances: when it is critical, unique or has revelatory power.⁹¹ This third circumstance justifies the usage of this methodology for this research, since the descriptive information produced in this study may be considered to be revelatory while there are no previous studies which focus on these issues. The research is descriptive in its nature. After more research is conducted on state-sponsored transnationalism in China's border areas, it will be possible to formulate hypothesis and test them.

The choice to study a prefecture as a case was made, even though an alternative choice would have been to study sub-prefecture units. However, a study of sub-prefecture administration would also have had to examine the prefecture level policies, as the autonomous prefecture is the unit which localizes state-sanctioned policies and produces its own policies and

⁹¹ Yin 1994, 13, 38-41. I am grateful to Prof. Markku Tykkyläinen for recommending this book to me.

regulations. Thus, instead of exploring both of them, I chose to concentrate on the prefecture. Time constraints, too, affected this choice. However, to gain a deeper insight in the prefecture level policies and practices, lower level units have to some extent been occasionally touched upon.

To highlight the specific features of Yanbian, its policies and practises have been contrasted with both China's successful southern coastal region and poor border regions. These comparisons are based mainly on secondary Chinese sources. From the border regions, Xinjiang and Yunnan have been chosen, as they represent different environments for ethnic transnational endeavours: the transnational ethnic networks of Xinjiang are more politicized, while those in Yunnan are less political than in Yanbian. In contrasting these regions a more nuanced analysis is developed on the capital transfers in Yanbian. An ideal case would have been to choose an autonomous prefecture from both coastal and border regions, but the scarcity of material made this impossible.

According to Jorma Kalela, the construction of sound historical knowledge requires the fulfilment of three criteria, viz: firstly, that reasoning should be impeccably "written out" so that the reader can trace the steps of argumentation. The second criterion is the cogency of the argument. This requires a well-grounded research question with a convincing explanation of the particularity of the arguments, as regards the earlier research on the subject. Thirdly, the arguments should be plausible in a cultural sense. This means that the historian should formulate the research questions in such a way that they are not anachronistic when asked on the historical period under scrutiny. This danger looms, if researchers define the questions from only the premises of their own time and culture. Following the same logic, the final interpretation of the sources should also be both possible and fair in their own context.⁹² Thus, for example, a Western student of China's history should explore the research topic through two perspectives. Firstly, she or he should take account of the differences between current times and the period under study. Additionally, awareness about the cultural, social and political differences between the student's home country and the target country, is essential, when defining the research questions, methods, theories and arguments.

⁹² Kalela 2000, 178-189.

The primary research material for this thesis consists, to a large extent, of official documents, and other officially approved texts, such as published political speeches. When analyzing such sources, historical source criticism has been applied, taking into account the following two caveats: for what purpose was the material produced, and thereby, how such purpose has influenced the information it contains. In practise, this has meant a critical assessment of the material within a local and national political-administrative framework.

The Source Material

A historiographic case study allows the usage of a vast array of source materials. The main stock of the primary sources in this study consists of official documents (eg regulations and annual work reports) and officially approved documents such as published speeches of leading politicians, and local chronicles⁹³. Newspaper articles and research reports written by officials can also be regarded as publications which have received official approval. Older documents from late 1980s and 1990s have been published in edited volumes which contain central political documents such as important speeches and regulations, five year plans and annual reports.⁹⁴ More recent documents are readily available through the Internet on the websites of the local governments. The government of Yanbian has published a large array of documents on its website since 2001.

The general five year plans and annual work plans of the prefectural government have been published regularly in the Yanbian Daily. Although the government officials interviewed were not allowed to furnish the development plans of their respective departments, nevertheless, few five year plans and annual plans of the various government departments were discovered through the Internet.

Articles from the local official newspaper *Yanbian Ribao* have also been acquired. The articles were collected from selected periods such as the months before and after the

⁹³ The local chronicles (*difangzhi*) are basic source materials in local level studies of China. Unfortunately, the latest chronicle of Yanbian was edited in 1996 and contained material only up to 1988. Yet, the capital of Yanbian, Yanji, has published its own chronicle over the years 1986-2000.

⁹⁴ Xu Chuanxiu main ed. (1990), *Yanbian qiye daquan*; Zhu Hongqi main ed. (2001), *Zhongguo dangdai juece wenku*; Yanbian Chaoxianzu zizhizhou lingdao ganbu diaocha lunwen ji. Shang juan. (2001); Huang Shuo main ed. (1997), *Zhongguo fazhan quanshu – Yanbianjuan*.

establishment of Sino-South Korean relations, the outbreak of the Asian financial crisis and the revealing of the wave of the migration-related frauds in the 1996. In addition, a variety of statistical data from the annual yearbooks of Yanji, Yanbian, Jilin and China was also collected.

The study is mainly based on Chinese language sources. This has not been a critical weakness since the object of the study is official policies. The relevant documents are available both in Chinese and Korean, and my interviewees were all fluent in Chinese. For this research, one Korean language book on Chinese Koreans, published in China, has been used.⁹⁵

In total, five fieldwork trips were undertaken in order to collect material for this work. During the trips, altogether 49 interviews were conducted of which 23 were with officials, 21 with researchers, 4 with members of associations and 1 with a businessman. Following the focus of this study on politics and administration, state officials, not migrants, were the source of the primary interview data. However, usefully, discussion opportunities with some returned migrants occasionally arose.

Most of the interviews with officials (14) were conducted during the second fieldwork trip to Yanbian in 2004. Additionally though, the study also benefited from a prior fieldwork trip to Beijing and Yanbian in 1996, when material was gathered for a research project on networks in China. Fortunately, at that time, a Finnish high-level delegation visited the area to study the Tumen River Area Programme and offered the opportunity to join the delegation for some meetings. In this way, useful contacts were created, in addition to the contacts arranged by my host unit, the Yanbian University. In 1999 and 2003, short visits to Beijing were undertaken in order to update information about recent developments in Yanbian and in research related to China's ethnic minorities and border regions. In 2004, when I joined the Graduate School, the second field work trip to Yanbian (4 weeks) took place. During that trip, the Foreign Affairs Office of the Yanbian Government arranged every interview requested. To complete source material gaps, the last fieldwork trip related to this work occurred in 2005 (2 weeks), during which material in Xiamen (Fujian) and Yanbian was obtained. During visits to

⁹⁵ Cho Sujin first read three relevant chapters of this book. Afterwards we went through the chapters together. I am grateful to her for assistance.

Yanbian and Xiamen, the local universities provided a research assistant to copy newspaper articles and statistical material, and who occasionally also accompanied me to the interviews.

In 1996, interviews were mainly open-ended, where the interviewees were asked to tell about a given topic. In this way, a wider understanding of the role of Koreans in the economic development of Yanbian was obtained. In 2004 and 2005, the interviews were prepared as focused interviews. Although they assumed a conversational manner they followed certain set of themes and questions. Appropriate sets of questions were designed for each interview from a longer list of questions. This list was later complemented and revised from the basis of information gained during the earlier interviews. Additionally, to acquire detailed information, related official documents were referred to during the interviews. In Beijing, some of the interviews with researchers were conducted in English. Otherwise, the language of the interviews was Chinese. Interviews were taped and transliterated by native speakers after my return to Finland. However, in some cases, interviewees did not allow me to tape the interviews, and in those cases notes were made. The interviews usually lasted about one hour. As the officials were often busy, their calendars booked with meetings, longer interviews would seldom have been possible.

The interviewees were well prepared to answer my questions, i.e. they were quite clear on what they were permitted to say. In addition, in order to avoid problems, the interviewees were never alone but accompanied by a colleague. In this way, the work units wanted to secure that the workers did not reveal any sensitive issues to foreigners in confidence. To reduce suspicion from my side, the research topic was explained to them emphasizing the economic aspect of interest in cross-border ethnic issues.

As is customary, the interview data is treated anonymously. This practise was also explained to the interviewees at the beginning of each interview. Instead of names and institutions, numbers in random order are used. When the location of the interview is evident from the text, it is mentioned in the footnote. Additionally to formal interviews, informal discussions and participant observations have been conducted.

Secondary printed sources include both Western and Chinese research on China's ethnic minorities, border regions, overseas Chinese, and the development impact of migration. An important source of Chinese language articles has been the Chinese CNKI database which contains articles from several thousands of academic journals, newspaper and also Master's and Doctoral Thesis.⁹⁶

Before this database was available (I learned about it in 2004), articles were collected from the reprints of the Clipping service of the Renmin University, from the collections of articles on ethnic issues (Series D5 *Minzu yanjiu*) from 1990 to 2003. When searching for material, the Chinese yearbook of ethnic studies also became helpful,⁹⁷ as it contains bibliographical information on the central books and articles published in China. In addition, books and articles at several libraries in China have been copied, of which the main ones were those at the Yanbian University, the Central Nationalities University, the Institute of Ethnic Studies and Anthropology of the CASS and the National Library in Beijing.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Source Material

The main body of the source material consists of officially approved texts and interviews with officials. These materials mainly reflect the official discourse and the wished-for situation rather than the reality. Yet, some of the officially approved materials were rather critical. The goal of these texts, which were mainly research reports, was to influence the prevailing policies and practices, and they pointed out inadequacies in them. However, this criticism was directed toward practices which were not politically sensitive and in fact under reconstruction, and thus, critical inputs were welcomed. I have tried to further disclose the discrepancy between discourse and reality with the help of other than official sanctioned materials. In this respect, South Korean sources have especially been useful, and discussions with locals have also rendered help.

⁹⁶ I am very grateful to Heike Schmidbauer who gave me a CNKI valuecard in 2005. Thanks to her, I was able to search material from CNKI conveniently in my office in Turku.

⁹⁷ Yu Baolin & Hua Zugen ed., *Zhongguo minzu yanjiu nianjian* 1994, 1995, 1996-1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001. Beijing: Minzu renmin chubanshe

With this combination of materials I have been able to obtain a realistic picture of the approved practices. However, with regard to activities not sanctioned by the state, the analysis remains thinner. Because of the political sensitivity of the research issue, I kept strictly to the approved administrative and economic activities during my interviews, not to impede the acquisition of information. Thus, I have been able to study the politically sensitive issues only on the surface without getting explicit examples on cases where the ethnic issues had eventually created tensions and influenced the formulation of the policies and practices. Yet, I have been able to trace hints on this from other, especially South Korean sources. Furthermore, I have not dug out information about corrupt practices, for example on the question to what extent did the officials help the locals emigrate with false documents. For that reason, the study provides a rather impeccable picture of the practices.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. In the introductory chapter, the purpose of the thesis, the methodological tools and the material is presented. The second chapter delineates the framework for the capital transfers, and describes the historical-political environment of China's border regions, the phases of their opening-up during China's modernization, and the conceptualization of cross-border ethnic groups in China. The third and fourth chapters analyze the policies and practices of capital transfers, and describe the organs engaged in the work, the methods and results of mobilization, and analyze the ethnic aspect of the work. The fifth chapter contains a synthesis of the third and the fourth chapter, with the object to identify similarities, differences and eventual overlaps in the mobilization of foreign Korean communities and Yanbianese labour migrants. The last chapter concludes the research findings.

2. THE CONTEXT FOR CAPITAL TRANSFERS: CHINA'S BORDER REGIONS AND CROSS-BORDER ETHNIC GROUPS

The aim of this chapter is to illuminate the political and historical context of cross-border ethnic economic activities in China. It begins with an exploration of some useful conceptual tools for a study on border areas. Next, the political-historical conditions in China's border regions are described. The concluding subchapters deal with the attempts of Chinese researchers to conceptualize cross-border ethnic groups with their political and economic connotations.

Here, it is timely to define the relationship of the terms "cross-border" and "transnational". In general, the term *transnational* is used to refer to border-crossings, regardless of the regional scope of those activities. Thus, it also denotes cross-border activities, when they are dense. As such, the term *cross-border* is used to denote a transborder subregion. Thus, it is considered that cross-border activities occur not only in the close vicinity of the border, but also in a wider adjacent region. This is consistent with, for example, Xiangming Chen's use of the term cross-border.⁹⁸ However, depending on the context, the Chinese use of the term is different. This is discussed later in this chapter.

China's Border Regions

Conceptualizing Border Regions

Boundaries established by warfare or power politics often create a climate of instability and uncertainty, and raise questions of allegiance. In addition to these historical remnants, border areas are frontline receptors of new international challenges such as illicit trade, migration and pollution. Even if such frictions were not present, the border historian Oscar Martinez claims that "fundamental questions about economic advantage, nationality, assimilation and identity will still continue to cause distress". These problems only dissipate when the borders are abolished.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Chen 2005, 47.

⁹⁹ Martinez [1994] 1996, 8-14.

Compared with other parts of a country border areas have specific characteristics. In their introductory book to border studies, Donnan and Wilson come to the point as they state that "some things can only occur at borders". They give three reasons for the special features of border areas: they have functions in the relations between states, they play a role in the origin and development of states, and many features of borders have been and remain significant to their respective nations and states.¹⁰⁰ Another explanation for the distinctiveness of border regions is also given by Oscar J. Martinez, who refers to two specific features: firstly location, which is often far from the core, and secondly the international climate created by the adjacency to another country.¹⁰¹ In her study on China's urban border areas, P.R. Gaubatz defines border areas rather as frontiers, which comprise a specific space between different regions with particular characteristics. In it, she pays attention to the combination of influences from several core areas which produce distinctive frontier cultures and societies.¹⁰² In all, the distinct characteristics of border regions derive not only from their geopolitical location, but also from a variety of other factors.

Martinez has developed additional conceptual tools which help to analyze the specific characteristics of border areas. He defines five unique forces, processes and characteristics which create a specific "borderlands milieu". Borderlands are more likely to be *multi-ethnic and heterogeneous* environments compared with the heartlands of states. Additionally, when located at a distance from the core areas, borderlanders often have a sense of *otherness* and *separateness*. Through processes of *transnationalism*, border areas are influenced by the values, ideas, and institutions of the neighbouring country and its inhabitants. The heterogeneous milieu may produce *ethnic conflicts and processes of accommodation*. Perhaps most unavoidably, borderlands are places of *international conflict and accommodation*.¹⁰³

With regard to the utilization of transnational capital transfers for economic development, border areas thus provide a rather specific environment from the state's viewpoint. As such, how can the state's relationship to its border areas be approached? In this respect, Malcolm Anderson provides an explanation, in which he describes borders as institutions and processes,

¹⁰⁰ Donnan & Wilson 1999, 4,5.

¹⁰¹ Martinez [1994] 1996, 8.

¹⁰² Gaubatz 1996, 14, 15.

¹⁰³ Martinez [1994] 1996, 8-14.

viz: institutions based on political agreements and legal texts, and as processes by being indispensable aspects of state policy and nation-building. In addition, Anderson identifies borders with four processes. They are 1) *instruments of state policy*, but these policies might be constrained by 2) *the degree of the state's de facto control* over the border and transborder activities. Borders are also important 3) *markers of identity* providing political beliefs and myths of identity about the unity of a territory. He refers here to the useful concept of "imagined community" proposed by Benedict Anderson. The definition of borders in different contexts for various objectives has 4) *created "discourses"* which are constantly reconstituted on popular, political and academic levels.¹⁰⁴ Borders are thus important instruments guarding the state's interests and nationhood. In this respect, transnational activities in a "borderland milieu", imbued with otherness and conflicts, pose challenges to the state.

Border regions can be penetrated to a different degree by *transnationalism*. Martinez has divided borderlands into two general types: national and transnational, according to the intensity of the contacts with people on the other side of the border. In national borderlands, people are not able to interact with their neighbours on the other side of the border. In contrast, transnational borderlanders are able to maintain significant ties with people in the adjoining regions, transborder linkages affecting central parts of their lives. Martinez claims that a relatively free interaction across borders enables local inhabitants to be active participants in transnational economic and social systems that stimulate trade, tourism, migration and cultural exchanges.¹⁰⁵ In this respect, Martinez' concept of transnational borderland corresponds with that of transnational communities proposed by sociologists and anthropologists in migration studies. The classical definition of transnational migrants or "transmigrants" formulated by Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc describe similar processes by emphasizing the diversity of trans-border relationships and their central role in a transmigrant's daily life.¹⁰⁶ However, a deficiency of the term arises in that it is not applicable for periods when effective national borders have not existed for example because of war or a dysfunctioning state. For this reason, it is not in all cases possible to construct an unbroken chronology for a border region using the typology of national/transnational border land. Further, I would also argue that in the current globalized world, this dichotomy is losing its

¹⁰⁴ Anderson 1996, 1-3.

¹⁰⁵ Martinez [1994] 1996, 6,9.

¹⁰⁶ Basch et al [1994] 1997, 7.

analytical edge, although in cases such as the North-South Korean border, it is still appropriate to refer to a national border. Nevertheless, I still find this terminology useful to describe the development of China's border regions from the 1950s to the early 21st century.

In China, border areas have been a central topic of its political writing for centuries. They were often studied in terms of military strength or weakness.¹⁰⁷ Border areas studies have a political mission even in current-day China and as a consequence researchers in this field are bound with the state's political goals given to them. Border area studies are directly linked to Chinese nation-state building proving and creating historical evidence for the unity of China's heartlands and border areas, and describing non-Chinese borderland populations as historically inseparable parts of the Chinese state and nation. Using Malcolm Anderson's terms, borderland studies in China provide the official discourse of the country's borderlands and at the same time produce political beliefs and myths about the ties of the border areas with China. A leading institute in the field is the Center of Borderland History and Geography of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, CASS (*Zhongguo bianjiang shi di yanjiu zhongxin*).

Ma Dazheng, the former head of this Center, has provided an officially approved definition of border areas. In the simplest form, border areas are defined to be far away from the centre, close to the national border, and possessing specific natural, historical and cultural features. He stresses the importance of history in defining a country's border regions and gives them four parameters: political, military, economic and cultural. In a political sense, border regions are transitional areas where the control of the central regime ends and a regime of a foreign power begins. Because states are confronted at borders, they also have military implications. On the questions of economic connotations, Ma only refers to the development gap between the core and border regions. Only in the case of culture does he mention interaction between neighbouring countries, but also here, he stresses that the interaction within the country is of greater importance.¹⁰⁸ However, in a list of important tasks in borderland research, presented in a book co-edited by Ma, other issues than domestic also come up. Research in cross-border ethnic groups, neighbouring countries, and border negotiations are listed among those seven

¹⁰⁷ Wade 2000, 31.

¹⁰⁸ Ma Dazheng 2004.

important research topics.¹⁰⁹ Thus, border-crossings are still regarded as important features of border areas, although the official definition neglects these and instead emphasizes strong ties with the core.

China's Border Regions and Nationality-building among Ethnic Minorities

China's current land boundary is the longest in the world, stretching over 22,000 kilometres and demarcating China's border with 14 states. The borderline was mainly shaped during the 19th century, a period when Western powers expanded their sphere of influence towards China whose statehood was weakening. China had to negotiate on its borders on the losing side, and consequently has considered these border agreements unequal treaties. China's borderline issues still remain unsettled, although during the recent years, China has actively attempted to agree in the disputes with its neighbours, in order to create a peaceful environment for its economic development. The largest stretch of undemarcated border is along its border with India. Also a 33-kilometer section of the Sino-North Korean border near Mount Paektu is unsettled.¹¹⁰ In addition to being the longest land boundary in the world, China's border might well also be described with another superlative, namely that of the most multiethnic border in the world.

When Communists took power in China (1949), the occupation of its frontier regions was important for several reasons: strategic, historical, symbolic and economic. Although Mao Zedong had initially considered granting independence for ethnic minorities, he later abandoned this plan. During the Long March (1934-1935), after close encounter with ethnic minorities in Sichuan and Tibet, he realized that many of them wanted to separate from China. In this case, China could have then become surrounded by hostile countries supported by colonial powers. Thus, for strategic reasons it became important for Mao to get control of all the multiethnic frontier regions which traditionally had protected China's heartlands.¹¹¹ In addition, it was vital to gain control over these regions, which were regarded as historically legitimated areas of China, in order to regain the pride and dignity of China, after a hundred

¹⁰⁹ Ma Dazheng & Liu Ti 1998, 177.

¹¹⁰ 90 per cent of China's border line was demarcated in 2005. According to a myth, Mount Paektu is the birth place of the Korean people. *People's Daily Online* 1 September 2005; *The World Factbook* 2002.

¹¹¹ Dreyer 1976, 67, 70.

years of humiliation. The symbolism of a united great China, which ruled the historical region of Chinese empire, "all-under-heaven", was essential even for the Chinese Communists.¹¹² Moreover, the border regions were also significant for the new rulers because of their vast raw-material and energy reserves.

How are China's border regions currently conceptualized? Ma Dazheng defines China's border regions in administrative terms: which administrative areas are identified as border areas. He lists several prefectures and counties at China's border as border regions, including Yanbian. In the case of Inner Mongolia, he draws the line along the Yinshan Mountain range as the areas north of the mountains differ from those of the southern areas in natural environment, history, culture and economy. As he did not specify which sub-provincial units of Xinjiang, Tibet and Gansu can be regarded as border regions, we may speculate that these provinces and autonomous regions are defined as border regions as such. He rejects the popular idea of Chinese frontiers as including provinces such as Qinghai and Guizhou. Rather, he calls them as regions remote from the centre (*bianyuan diqu*).¹¹³ As Ma has defined border areas in administrative terms, it follows that the administration of these units also has specific border region features, which supports the assumption that their administration differs from that of non-border administrative units.

As Donnan and Wilson have noted, border areas are specific because of their role in the origin and development of states. This central role of border regions in China's traditional perception of herself changed dramatically when China faced the task of establishing and building a modern nation-state upon a two thousand year long tradition of culturally defined empire. A sense of unity needed to be created among the Han Chinese and the various non-Chinese, but whom the Han Chinese had treated as barbarians for the last two thousand years.

Following Malcolm Anderson, border areas are markers of identity,¹¹⁴ and the identification of borders provides a definition for insiders and outsiders. In his book on the Finnish-Russian border, the Finnish geographer Anssi Paasi, has discussed the process of constructing "we-ness" in border areas. This process ultimately aims at acquiring the shared but special

¹¹² Weggel 1985, 172; Barnett [1961] 1963, 277.

¹¹³ Ma Dazheng 2004.

¹¹⁴ Anderson 1996.

information of the reference group, and of other groups. It signifies and legitimizes the state and its boundaries.¹¹⁵ Paasi also emphasises the role of history writing and education in this process.

People's Republic of China has been determined to tie ethnic minorities closely to its imagined "united family of 56 nationalities". The term "nationality-building", used by the American anthropologist Uradyn E. Bulag, but who was born in Inner Mongolia, describes this process well. Through different practices of nationality-building, the state-legitimized 55 ethnic minorities were tightly interwoven to the new China. Nationality-building specified the qualities said to define each minority. For example, Korean nationality characters were purified and distanced from North and South Korea, creating a specific Chinese Korean national minority. In general, the Chinese socialist nationality-building emphasised politically "safe" characteristics for each nationality. Specific national traits were identified in language, food habits, clothes and festivals. Nearly all of minority nationalities were depicted to love song and dance. Minorities became historialized and traditionalized, and they represented the past, not the modern, which was reserved for the Han Chinese.¹¹⁶ The history of China's minority nationalities was interpreted in terms of co-operation with and learning from the more advanced Han Chinese. This image of "ethnographic" minority nationalities was then reproduced through education, festivals and the national media, up to the point where to a certain extent these minorities began to identify themselves with these created, imagined nationalities. In many cases, minorities themselves participated in the reproduction of these distorted national traits.

Having discussed the border regions within the context of China, the next section will describe how the ethnic cross-border ties have evolved during China's recent history.

China's National and Transnational Border Regions

Both Xinjiang and Yunnan have been famous routes for the historic silk roads, plus although not as known and as significant, the current area of Yanbian has also been a centre for regional trade. During the Kingdom of Parhae (698-926) the city of Hunchun was a major

¹¹⁵ Paasi 1995, 54-58.

¹¹⁶ Bulag 2000, 181-182

seaport and trading centre. From the year 882 on, the Kingdom of Parhae sent trade delegations to Japan from Hunchun and Kraskino, establishing important regional trade routes.¹¹⁷ The term "maritime silk road" was later used by local Chinese researchers to describe the vibrant trade of this time. Entering the 17th century, though, the significance of Hunchun harbour had waned.¹¹⁸

Circumstances changed in the 19th century as the area came under the interests of expanding regional powers. After the Sino-Russian war (1887), China had to cede the entire Primorsky territory to Russia which began to develop the city of Vladivostok at the vicinity of the Tumen River, which reinvigorated trade from Hunchun. After the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, Japan gained supremacy over the Korean Peninsula. As Jiandao (roughly current Yanbian) had a large Korean population at that time, Japan used the local Koreans as a pretext for advancing its interests in Northeast China. In 1905, Japan declared that it would protect the Koreans of Jiandao, whom it regarded as nationals of the Japanese controlled Korea. Additionally, it forced China to open main cities and towns for trade, Hunchun included¹¹⁹, thus Hunchun once more turned into a regional trade port. The port was officially re-established in 1910. After Northeast China became under Japanese control, the city developed into the second largest harbour in the northeastern China, after Dalian.¹²⁰ Together, Northeast China, Korea and Japan, formed a Japan-led regional economic area. In 1938, China lost the shipping rights from the Hunchun port to the Sea of Japan following Japan's blockade of the mouth of the Tumen River, caused by the Soviet-Japanese border clash.¹²¹ Since then, because of the accumulation of sand, brought by the river to its delta area, the mouth of the river has become unnavigable, and Yanbian has no longer direct access to sea.

As with Yanbian, China's other frontier regions were also parts of thriving regional economic areas, under a strong influence of foreign powers at the turn of the century. Guangxi belonged the French sphere of interest while the British influence stretched from Yunnan through Tibet to Xinjiang. The Soviet Union gained monopoly in Xinjiang's trade, and its influence

¹¹⁷ Davies 2000, 1.

¹¹⁸ Liu Zhiming & Wang Chanping 1994, 55. The authors also claim recent research has disclosed that in the early days Hunchun was a important port in trade with North America.

¹¹⁹ Olivier 1993, 21.

¹²⁰ Che Zhejiu 1992, 16; Liu Zhiming & Wang Chanping 1994, 55.

¹²¹ Chen 2005, 179.

culminated in the establishment of the East Turkestan Republic (1944-49) in the Eastern part of Xinjiang.¹²² With support from Soviet-Russia, the Mongolian People's Republic was declared independent from China in 1921.

According to Martinez, intensive contacts across a national border between two adjoining areas note a transnational border area. The contacts in China's frontier regions were dense, but it is debatable whether or not these regions can be described as transnational at the turn of the century since large areas lacked an effective border during that time. At the same time, they were within a sphere of influence of foreign powers. The term translocal would be suitable here to describe the dense contacts between different localities during that period. In any case, after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Martinez' terms become applicable as its borders were consolidated. Because the newly established People's Republic wanted to gain full control over cross-border activities after the previously strong influence of foreign states in China's border areas, they gradually turned into national border regions. The primary goal of the new government was to strengthen its grip in these areas and its leaders wanted to defend them from any attempts by hostile foreign forces to gain a foothold there. In the 1950s, state-controlled border trade was initiated with friendly neighbouring countries. For example, bilateral agreements were signed with North Korea on border trade, small scale trade and border markets.¹²³

However, from the late 1950s onwards, China's relations with its erstwhile ally, the Soviet Union, began to deteriorate. Further, the Cold War had begun, and China was confronted with the Western US-led bloc, and soon found itself surrounded by enemies, and consequently closed its borders for transborder traffic. From the 1960s to early 1980s, China's borders were practically closed.¹²⁴ The border areas came under close central control and received considerable investments for military build-up, at the expenses of financial assistance for local economic development, and received little political leeway.¹²⁵ Despite a prohibition on crossing the border, there were still isolated cases of massive border crossings. For example,

¹²² Wiemer 2004, 164-168.

¹²³ Li Zhuqing & Shi Tongyang 1994, 142.

¹²⁴ Ma Manli et al 2003, 230.

¹²⁵ Chen 2005, 157.

in 1962 an estimated 80,000 Uighurs crossed the Sino-Russian border in Xinjiang in protest against the attempts to organize communes.¹²⁶

From the late 1970s onwards, it is possible to discern a trend of the Chinese borderlands turning, in the terminology of Oscar Martinez, from national to transnational. This process could be divided into three phases: 1972-1982, 1982-1992, and 1992 into the early 21st century.

After the radical phase of the Cultural Revolution, China shifted in its international orientation. China and the USA agreed to pursue the normalization of official ties. This new foreign policy coincided with small-scale experiments to develop the domestic economy. After Mao Zedong's death in 1976 and the Cultural Revolution declared to have come to an end, these developments culminated in 1978 in the inauguration of modernization policies. To secure steady process of this modernization, China needed a peaceful regional environment and foreign economic cooperation. As a result, China began the process of mending its ties with neighbouring countries and developing foreign trade relations.

After the official inauguration of China's modernization policy in the late 1978, only four cities on China's southern coast were allowed to open up (Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou, Xiamen). These cities were granted preferential policies in order to attract foreign investments. In 1988, the Island of Hainan became the fifth Special Economic Zone. Earlier in 1984, fourteen coastal cities had also been declared as Open Coastal Cities. Larger Coastal Economic Open Zones were established; two of them in Northeast China - Shandong and Liaodong peninsulas were entitled as Open Coastal Economic Areas in 1988. While border areas were not granted preferential rights to conduct international trade, *cross-border trade* was supported. This type of trade took place along the adjoining regions of the countries, with which China had a common border. The first border trade ports were opened in 1982, but only one of them in Northeast China: the border city of Manzhouli in Heilongjiang was granted the right to conduct border trade with the adjoining areas of the Soviet Union. At the same time unofficial cross-border trade emerged. In 1984, the State Council issued procedures to govern small-scale border trade and formulated five principles which gave the border

¹²⁶ Harris 1993, 115.

regions the right and responsibility to promote border trade by themselves.¹²⁷ The regional scope of this kind of trade was later demarcated as 20 kilometres from the border.¹²⁸ Through the 1980s, border regions did not enjoy preferential policies with regard to foreign trade. Thus, economic cooperation with these regions was less attractive and more bureaucratic. Compared with the coastal regions, the economy of the border regions tended to also suffer from a conservative and closed mind-set, produced partly by their isolation and strategic position on the border. For example, in Xinjiang the conservative leadership tried initially to block the implementation of economic reforms, fearing a destabilizing impact.¹²⁹ Although decision-making power was gradually accorded to the lower level units of administration, all regions were not willing to take initiative. Conversely, the centre could not effectively monitor whether the border regions exceeded their limits of authority in expanding the trade across the borders. In the words of the researcher Kuah Khun Eng, "the centre was simply too far away".¹³⁰

In 1991, the State Council issued a document on how to promote prosperity and stability in border provinces through active development of border trade and economic cooperation.¹³¹ Only the next year, the State Council granted the inland cities preferential policies to conduct international trade. This was prompted by Deng Xiaoping's speech in favour of further market reforms during his famous Southern trip in 1992. This new policy was confirmed by the 14th Party Congress (1992) which recognized that the economic development of border regions was important for the unity and border security of China.¹³² In the Jilin province, only Hunchun received this status at that time. This change was prompted by the demands of the inland provinces, and following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Regional trade was regarded as an effective tool to stabilize the area.¹³³ Thus, in general, the opening up of the border areas proceeded in two phases: from 1982 onwards, small scale border trade was encouraged, and from 1992 onwards, more extensive regional trade was promoted. However, the course of

¹²⁷ Waimaobu 1984. *Bianjing xiao'e maoyi zanzing guanli banfa*; Wen Jun 1998, 25.

¹²⁸ Kuah 2000, 92.

¹²⁹ Bovingdon 2004, 125; On resistance against economic reforms in Guangxi, see e.g. Hendrischke 1997, 22-27.

¹³⁰ Kuah 2000, 78.

¹³¹ Jingmao deng bumen 1991. *Ganyu jiji fazhan bianjing maoyi he jingji hexuo cujin bianjing fanrong wending yijian de tongzhi*.

¹³² *Beijing Review* 26 October 1992.

¹³³ Hoppe 1992, 364.

developments varied greatly between the border regions because of political tensions between China and some of its neighbouring countries.

In the late 1970s, China's relations with Soviet Union, India, and Vietnam were tense, which made official border trade with these countries nearly impossible at that time. Border market places were opened at the Vietnamese border in 1983, but the trade only started to expand in the late 1980s.¹³⁴ During the Sino-Soviet rift, all economic activities halted except for trade in Suifenhe in Heilongjiang, where border trade continued on a small scale. Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia were able to restart border trade with the Soviet Union in 1983. In 1986, China and the Soviet Union agreed to re-establish economic relations between Xinjiang and the Soviet Republics of Central Asia.¹³⁵ One year later, Jilin was allowed to launch official border trade with the country. Cross-border trade with Laos, Bhutan and Mongolia was also hindered because of strained relations, but, this did not restrict the development of unofficial border trade. Official relations between China and Laos were established in 1989, which facilitated the growth of regular border trade. Border trade with Mongolia resumed in 1985.¹³⁶ Bhutan still had no official relations with China in 2006 as of writing, and the volume of unofficial border trade has been insignificant.¹³⁷

Until 1962, India had been the most important border trade partner of Tibet, but trade with India stalled after the Sino-Indian border war. After that Nepal became the most important border trade partner of Tibet. This trade continued all through 1960s and 1970s, but was small in scale in the 1970s. It only began to expand in 1984, when the central government allowed the opening of several border trade ports there.¹³⁸ On several occasions, China and India were confronted militarily along their border, the last incident taking place in 1986. Only in 1999, did the bilateral relations between the two return to normal,¹³⁹ but informal border trade between Tibet and the disputed Sikkim area had resumed already 1991, when Prime Minister Li Peng visited India. In 2003, the states agreed to open the traditional trade route, the Nathula Mountain pass, for border trade and signed an accord on border trade. At the same

¹³⁴ Huang Wanlun & Li Wenchao 1990, 395; Kuah 2000, 81.

¹³⁵ Li Zhuqing & Shi Tongyang 1994, 70.

¹³⁶ Huang Wanlun & Li Wenchao 1990, 395-400.

¹³⁷ *Bhutan News Online* 5 July 2005; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2003.

¹³⁸ Pan Zhaodong 1989, 18; Zhang Tingting 2004, 109.

¹³⁹ Sidhu & Yuan 2001, 358

time, China in effect acquiesced that Sikkim was part of India.¹⁴⁰ However, as of early 2006, official border trade had still not been restored although there had been preparations for this, and expectations for border trade were great.¹⁴¹

Yunnanese border inhabitants had initiated small scale trade with their Burmese neighbours already in the 1970s.¹⁴² Official trade between Burma and Yunnan recovered in 1979, and the city of Ruili in the westernmost part of Yunnan opened its markets at the Burmese border in 1981.¹⁴³ Ethnically-based trade between Yunnan and Thailand also emerged at the onset of reform policies.¹⁴⁴ Border trade between Pakistan and Xinjiang was initiated in 1967, and continued throughout the years of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁴⁵

Border trade with North Korea was initiated in Yanbian in 1982.¹⁴⁶ Official economic relations with South Korea were possible only in 1992, when China established diplomatic relations with it. Thus, the opening up of Yanbian was completed late when compared with other regions. It was among the last areas which could initiate trade with an adjoining state with co-ethnics. Currently, only Tibet and Xinjiang still lack official economic relations with their neighbouring India and Bhutan. The development of Yanbian's foreign trade will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

Thus, as outlined above, China's border areas transformed from national borders (1960s-1970s) into transnational borders. Until the late 1970s and early 1980s, in most cases, the inhabitants of border regions were not able to interact freely with their neighbours on the other side of the border, and their lives were strictly confined only to the national sphere. Since the 1980s, borderlanders created significant ties with people in the adjoining regions, transborder linkages affecting central parts of their lives, but, the density of the ties has fluctuated depending upon political tension between China and its neighbours. For example,

¹⁴⁰ Bhattacharyay & De 2005, 25; Zhang Tingting 2004, 108-109: *The Tribune* 23 June 2003. In a referendum in 1974, the large majority of the population voted to join the Indian Union. China did not consent to the decision, and claimed India had annexed Sikkim.

¹⁴¹ *Indobase* 24 February 2006.

¹⁴² Bai Zhensheng 1990, 14.

¹⁴³ Huang Wanlun & Li Wenchao 1990, 392; Li Zhuqing & Shi Tongyang 1994, 125.

¹⁴⁴ Zhu Zhenming 1991, 4.

¹⁴⁵ Li Zhuqing & Shi Tongyang 1994, 71.

¹⁴⁶ Huang Wanlun & Li Wenchao 1990, 400.

North Korea restricted the border trade and number of border-crossings in 1986 and 1992 when China took steps toward South Korea. Similarly, the escalation of the Spratly Island dispute in 1993 strained the cross-border activities at the Sino-Vietnamese border.

These cross-border processes have put pressure on redefining the old notions of ethnic minorities in China, and increased the need to understand the political and economic consequences of these cross-border relations. The next sub-chapter examines the emergence and evolution of the concept cross-border ethnic group in China, and their political and economic connotations.

Defining Cross-border Ethnic Groups in China

The Emergence of Definitions of Cross-border Ethnic Groups in China

In China, three terms have generally been used to signify cross-border ethnic groups: *kuajie minzu*, *kuajing minzu* and *kuaguo minzu*. Cross-border ethnic groups have also been studied within the field of overseas Chinese studies, which has created a parallel term "ethnic minority overseas Chinese" (*shaoshu minzu huaqiao huaren*).

In order to understand the Chinese discussion on ethnic minority nationalities, the Marxist connotations of the term nationality, *minzu*, in China is significant. Chinese researchers uphold the Marxist view, that nationalities are a product of an uneven economic and social development, different nationalities being on different "ladder steps" of development. The task of a socialist state is to help less developed nationalities, that is ethnic minorities, to reach an equal development with the most advanced nationality. The development difference between nationalities creates a "nationality question" (*minzu wenti*). This nationality question has both a wider and narrower meaning. In the former it refers to the whole process from the emergence of a nationality to its disappearance, and in the latter it covers questions like ethnic discrimination, ethnic disputes and oppression. The content of these questions differs from time to time according to the prevailing contradictions in the society.¹⁴⁷ The state plans and conducts "ethnic work" (*minzu gongzuo*) in order to solve these nationality questions.

¹⁴⁷ Li Zhuqing & Na Ri 1998, 23-24.

In a similar fashion, there exists a "cross-border ethnic question" (*kuajie minzu wenti*)¹⁴⁸ in China, which the state aims to dissolve. This cross-border ethnic question also has two meanings. Firstly, in the Marxist framework it refers to the differences within a cross-border ethnic group caused by its division.¹⁴⁹ In a narrow political sense, it refers to the questions of security and national unity which the cross-border ethnic groups may create.¹⁵⁰

Studies in cross-border ethnic groups re-appeared in Chinese social sciences at the beginning of the 1980s.¹⁵¹ In Chinese academic works, a cross-border ethnic group (*kuajing minzu*) was defined for the first time in 1984 in Fan Hongui's article on Sino-Vietnamese cross-border ethnic groups.¹⁵² There was a clear political need to increase understanding about the emerging cross-border activities of ethnic minorities living on the both sides of the border. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia along ethnic lines made this research even more urgent. Simultaneously with the emergence of the discussion on cross-border ethnic groups, a need to redefine the very term *minzu* became topical. The earlier official definition, borrowed from Stalin,¹⁵³ was considered inappropriate to Chinese conditions.¹⁵⁴ Thus, the whole field of ethnic studies in China has been in flux since the 1990s.

In order to create a basis for studies on this issue, the Central Institute of Nationalities (*Zhongyang minzu xueyuan*)¹⁵⁵ in Beijing began to provide a MA programme "Studies on cross-border ethnic groups" (*kuajie minzu yanjiu*) in 1986. This programme enrolled new

¹⁴⁸ Or *kuajing* / *kuaguo minzu wenti*.

¹⁴⁹ Zhou Jianxin 2002, 273.

¹⁵⁰ Cao Xing 1999, 6,7.

¹⁵¹ Cross-border ethnic groups were already studied in China in the 1930s and 1940s. However, at that time there were no attempts to create a definition for border-crossing minorities. After 1949, the Central Institute of Nationalities conducted research on cross-border ethnic groups, but during the 60s and 70s there were only scattered studies which were related to the border disputes with Soviet Union and India. Most of the studies in cross-border ethnic groups have been made in the realm of ethnology and anthropology, and in a lesser extent in political science and economics. Articles analyzing related questions were published mainly in local journals in border regions, and in Beijing at the Central University of Nationalities and the CASS Institute of Ethnic Studies and Anthropology. On the other side, studies on transnational relations of Chinese people have a long tradition with regard to overseas Chinese, who mainly are of Han Chinese descendant. (Zhang Shuqing 1999, 6-7.) Within the new field of cross-border studies, Chinese researchers are in a new situation, where both Han Chinese and ethnic minorities have to be analyzed side by side as equal objects of research.

¹⁵² Fan Longgui 1984. *Zhongyue lianguo kuajing minzu. Xinan minzu lishi yanjiu jikan*, 5. Referred to in Zhang Shuqing's Doctoral dissertation *Kuaguo minzu wenti xilun* (1999), 9.

¹⁵³ According to Stalin, a nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological makeup, manifested in a community of culture.

¹⁵⁴ Zhou Jianxin 2002, 260-261.

¹⁵⁵ The status of the Institute has since been upgraded to University.

students twice, but then discontinued through retirement of the teachers. In 1994, the programme started anew, now with the title "*kuajing minzu yanjiu*" (*jie* strictly meaning borderline and *jing* also meaning border but depicting an area, not a single line). Since 1986, the Central Institute of Nationalities has also undertaken research on cross-border issues as assigned by the Ethnic Affairs Commission of the State Council, *Minwei*.¹⁵⁶ Other universities and research institutes have also subsequently taken up studies on cross-border ethnic groups.¹⁵⁷ Since 1998, national seminars on the topic have been arranged by the Association of World Ethno-National Studies¹⁵⁸ (*Shijie minzu xuehui*), local research institutes and government and party organs.

Although politically significant, the political sensitiveness of cross-border issues has severely restricted the development of research in cross-border ethnic groups. In order to avoid trouble, researchers have tended to avoid the theme, research cooperation has not been organized, meagre funding, has among other things, led to few opportunities to conduct surveys and gather relevant material, and important material has been categorised as secret.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, the research has been hampered by the lack of any relevant theoretical framework. Chinese researchers were bound for a long time to Marxist classical theories, which they have found difficult to apply to these new issues.¹⁶⁰ Some of the researchers identified the need for cooperation with foreign colleagues in order to build methodological and theoretical tools for the research of cross-border ethnic issues in China, but even this has been difficult due to the political sensitivity of the issue.¹⁶¹

In the latter part of the 1990s, Chinese researchers and policy-makers gradually accepted the complexity of cross-border relations of ethnic minorities, and they remain struggling to redefine the theories and concepts related to cross-border ethnic groups.

¹⁵⁶ Jin Chunzi & Wang Jianmin 1994, 25-27.

¹⁵⁷ For example the Institute of Ethnic Studies and Anthropology of the CASS and the Sun Yatsen University provide courses on cross-border ethnic groups.

¹⁵⁸ English translation by the author based on the translation of the journal name "Shijie Minzu" (World Ethno-National Studies).

¹⁵⁹ Song Quan 1998, 17; Liu Jichang 2001, 26, 27.

¹⁶⁰ Song Quan 1998, 17.

¹⁶¹ Interviews 1 and 5, Beijing 2000; Pan Jiao 1996, 9.

Toward a Definition of Cross-border Ethnic Groups

When defining the term "cross-border ethnic group" in Chinese, language poses several challenging problems. First, the term *minzu*, which stands for "ethnic group", also means "people", "nation" or "nationality".¹⁶² This term was originally appropriated by Chinese nationalists from Japanese in the early 20th century in order to delineate the emerging modern China as a unified nation.¹⁶³

From the 1980s onwards, three terms have been used to define the concept "cross-border ethnic group": *kuajie minzu* 跨界民族, *kuajing minzu* 跨境民族 and *kuaguo minzu* 跨国民族. As yet, there is not consensus on the exact usage of these terms, and they are still often used interchangeably, although an initial understanding of their specific meanings begins to emerge. The first character in each term, *kua*, can be translated into English as the prefix "cross-" or "trans-". The lexical difference between the three terms makes *kuajie* the most specific. *Jie* 界 means borderline, and thus *kuajie minzu* refers to ethnic groups whose area of inhabitancy is continuous across a border. *Jing* 境 denotes a border region and consequently *kuajing minzu*, implies ethnic groups whose area of inhabitancy may be divided not only by a borderline but also by a wider region. However, the term *kuaguo minzu* is clearly different from the other two in that *guo* 国 means state and *kuaguo minzu* usually refers to ethnic groups scattered throughout the world.

¹⁶² There are also other terms in the Chinese language which can be translated as "ethnic group". The new terms may replace the term "*minzu*" for political reasons. In China, nationalities (*minzu*) were assigned autonomous regions at different levels of administration. This model was borrowed from the Soviet Union where each nationality autonomous region and the Soviet Republics were created for ethnic nationalities. However, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union when the Soviet Republics of the different nationalities became independent Chinese researches encountered problems to justify that China's nationalities were not similarly legitimized to create nation-states. To avoid this problem, some researchers proposed the usage of the term "renmin" 人民, i.e. people, instead of "*minzu*". This new term, "*kuajie renmin*", would refer to politically defined citizens of a country, and not to ethnically determined nationalities. However, this term has not been widely used. Another suggestion to avoid this diffusion, was made by Zhou Jianxin. He maintains that the Chinese term "*zuqun*" 族群, referring to "people" or "ethnic groups", implies culturally defined groups and not nationalities, nor nations. Thus "*kuaguo zuqun*" would mean culturally defined cross-border groups. Zhou mentions that some Chinese researchers and government organizations have started do draw a clearer line between ethnic groups "*zuqun*" and nationalities "*minzu*". Nevertheless, "*minzu*" remains the most commonly used term in this context. Yang Mian 2000, 42-43; Zhou Jianxin 2002, 261.

¹⁶³ Iredale & Guo 2003, 8; Dikötter 1994, 97.

Several researchers share the opinion, that "*kuaguo minzu*" can be used as a generic term to describe ethnic groups, whose members inhabit different countries, while "*kuajie minzu*" and "*kuajing minzu*" thus live in compact communities adjacent to national borders.¹⁶⁴

The first attempt to conceptualize cross-border ethnic groups in China began from the task to determine which of China's 55 officially approved ethnic minorities were such cross-border ethnic groups. Until then, minority nationalities had only been defined within the confines of China, as solely Chinese nationalities. As research on these groups developed, the picture of cross-border ethnic groups became more complex than simply just division of minorities into cross and non-cross-border groups. For example, members of ethnic minorities had migrated to other countries, and then sometimes even creating compact ethnic communities in their new home countries. Thus, the problem arises of whether to regard all ethnic minorities as cross-border ethnic groups? Further problematic was the question whether or not Han Chinese should also be regarded as a cross-border ethnic group because of the vast overseas Chinese population. Thus, essential problem was the definition of migrant populations.

Jin Chunzi had already attempted to tackle this in the early 1990s, in the book "China's cross-border ethnic groups" in which she asked, under which circumstances migrants could be regarded as *kuajie minzu*. Her initial suggestion was that migrant communities that have managed to maintain their traditional culture could be regarded as *kuajie minzu*. According to her reasoning, temporary overseas residents and those who have not taken up the nationality of the host country, should not be included in the category.¹⁶⁵

The issue of migrant populations was discussed during the second academic conference on cross-border ethnic groups in 1999. Several participants there, suggested, that cross-border living (*kuajie shenghuo*) and cross-border activities (*kuajie huodong*) could also create cross-border ethnic groups, as evidenced by the Han Chinese migrants who worked and conducted business in the Russian Far East and Moscow. They also identified that cross-border activities could lead to a new kind of political problem, that of ethnic groups crossing the border: "*minzu kuajie wenti*". The example provided was the massive flow of Han Chinese migrants

¹⁶⁴ Ge Gongshang 1999, 2; Luo Shujie 1997, 53.

¹⁶⁵ Jin Chunzi & Wang Jianmin 1994, 3, 4.

into the Soviet Far East and the xenophobic reaction of Russians to the "new Chinese invasion".¹⁶⁶ Political implications apart, this kind of assessment of cross-border activities was a clear step away from the earlier nationality-based discussion, towards mere a study of transnational communities.

However, the term transnational community (*kuaguo shequn*) has not yet been defined as regards cross-border ethnic groups in China and nor is it yet widely used there. In a report from a conference on overseas Chinese issues held in 2002, Cheng Xi took up the terms transnational community (*kuaguo shequn*) and scattered population groups (*sanju minzu*) as definitions for migrant populations.¹⁶⁷ In 2003, the Journal of Ethno-National Studies, *Minzu Yanjiu*, brought the term "*kuaguo shequn*" into the field of ethnic studies in China. In his article on economic globalization and international migration, Li Qirong mentioned "transnational communities" (*kuaguo shequn*) as a new challenge to the sovereignty of states. In this, he borrowed the term from a book, which is translated from English, but does not elaborate any further the term.¹⁶⁸ As such, these terms are ineffect new loan words which have not yet found ground in the Chinese academic discussion.

As previously mentioned, depending on the intensity of the cross-border contacts, Martinez has suggested that borderlands can be divided to national and transnational. Further, researchers in transnational migration regard multiple and intensive cross-border relations as a necessary feature of a transnational community. In China, the level of the intensity of the contacts has not yet been an issue. Rather, it has been taken as an inherent characteristic of cross-border or transnational relations.

In the handbook on China's cross-border ethnic groups, Jin Chunzi describes cross-border ethnic groups as sustaining intimate relations across the border: e.g. maintaining close cross-border links through visits to relatives, marriages, common religious activities, border trade, common pasture, and just by frequently crossing the border. She also points out that renewed contacts have supported the maintenance of common ethnic characteristics and a sense of unity, and that such features are inherent in cross-border ethnic groups. She also notes, that

¹⁶⁶ Yun Lai 1999, 122-124.

¹⁶⁷ Cheng Xi 2002, 3.

¹⁶⁸ Li Qirong 2003.

the expansion of media and trade since the late 1980s has further facilitated the deepening of ties and the sense of togetherness.¹⁶⁹

Hu Qiwan also points to the intimate ties within a cross-border group in his narrow definition of cross-border ethnic groups. He suggests that in a narrow sense, those ethnic groups which have maintained their culture, language and a close relationship with their ancestral home, can be regarded as cross-border ethnic groups. Here he takes overseas Chinese and overseas Miao as an example, because despite their dispersal, they cherish their traditional culture and maintain contacts with their home region. His wider definition also includes such groups which through dispersal have distanced themselves from each other culturally and linguistically. Here he mentions the impact of the majority population of the country of residence though, rather than the lack of contact with kin, as the main reason for these differences.¹⁷⁰ Thus, the density and qualities of the cross-border *ties* have not been central criteria when defining cross-border ethnic groups, but rather the qualities of the groups themselves.

The studies on cross-border ethnic groups have been most vibrant in Yunnan and in Xinjiang. Cross-border activities have also been studied in Yanbian, but not within the framework of cross-border ethnic studies. There has been intensive interest among Chinese Koreans to do research on the ethnic cross-border activities and their consequences, but in these research reports the *kuajie*-terms have been scarcely used.¹⁷¹ I surmise that the researchers have not used the term in order to avoid the political stigma attached to it. Contrarywise, in Xinjiang, the political nature of the cross-border ethnic groups has been the very reason for the active research there on it, while in Yunnan the political issues have not been relevant.

¹⁶⁹ Jin Chunzi & Wang Jianmin 1994, 5.

¹⁷⁰ Hu Qiwan 1994, 50.

¹⁷¹ I have found only one article on ethnic Koreans where the term "kuajie minzu" has been used in the title. Xie Zhaohua (1998). Kuajing minzu yanjiu de poqixing – yi chaoxianzu wei lie. *Beifang minzu* 1. Otherwise, if the term is used, there is usually only a short notion that ethnic Koreans are a cross-border ethnic group. The term is most often used by Korean researchers located outside Yanbian, e.g. Che Zhejiu (Changchun) and Zheng Xinzhe (Beijing).

The Perceived Political and Economic Significance of Cross-border Ethnic groups and Cross-border Activities

In general, cross-border ethnic groups are related to several political issues in China. Chinese researchers describe border regions as politically sensitive frontlines of national defence, which have an important strategic position.¹⁷² In border regions, centrifugal forces may occur threatening territorial integrity, creating social instability, influencing official relations between countries and eventually leading to the disintegration of the country.¹⁷³ Basically, border regions are ascribed similar characteristics as they are in Western studies.

The political significance of cross-border ethnic groups already becomes evident in the Chinese discussion of the definition of the term. The main focus has been on the fact that these groups cross borders and thus *may* create instability at the border and threaten border security and national unity. An illuminating example is that provided in a special issue on cross-border ethnic groups of the authoritative journal *Minzu yanjiu*, in which its first two articles revolved around the question of border security.¹⁷⁴ One of the writers, Cao Xing, draws a distinction between the terms *kuajie*, *kuajing* and *kuaguo minzu* according to their capacity to create trouble at the border. According to Cao, *kuajie minzu* is different from *kuajing* and *kuaguo minzu*, because the contiguous area of inhabitancy of *kuajie minzu* is divided by a border, and thereby eventually threatens the stability of national borders. However, he also states that cross-border ethnic groups do not inevitably create cross-border ethnic problems (*kuajie minzu wenti*), but only under certain circumstances might they develop into an issue of border security and national unity.¹⁷⁵

Four cross-border ethnic groups have been identified as targets of foreign groups which aim to split China. These foreign based movements are the pan-Korean movement bent on the establishment of the historical Kingdom of Goguryeo, the pan-Mongolian movement, the Eastern Turkestan "terrorist movement" and the Tibetan independence movement. In addition,

¹⁷² Shen Xu 1998, 160.

¹⁷³ Cao Xing 1999, 10; Wang Jinguo 2003.

¹⁷⁴ Ge Gongshang 1999, 2

¹⁷⁵ Cao Xing 1999, 6, 7.

the United States and "other Western forces" are accused of trying to split China through means of religion and ethnic issues.¹⁷⁶

Cao proposes that there are four main causes for the emergence of a cross-border ethnic problem. First, he identifies that only ethnic groups with a strong ethnic self-consciousness (*minzu de ziwo yishi*), which may even override the national consciousness (*guomin yishi*), can generate this problem. Following this, the three further reasons can be found in economic and political disparity compared with kinsfolk in neighbouring countries, negligence of ethnic minorities in national economic policies and finally, in disputes which arise from the conflicting interests between different ethnic groups.¹⁷⁷ In his analysis then, the overriding reasons for the emergence of cross-border ethnic questions are thus related to the sense of negligence and economic inequality as compared with other ethnic groups in the country of residence, or with kinsfolk in neighbouring countries. Thus, poor socio-economic conditions of border areas are recognized as the main reason for instability.

Zhou Jianxin, who has written extensively on cross-border ethnic groups at the Sino-Lao and the Sino-Vietnamese border, also tackles the political aspects of the issue. He maintains that cross-border ethnic groups may contain a tendency either towards unity within the group, or differentiation.¹⁷⁸ He states that the political tendency towards unity with co-ethnics in foreign countries may lead to conflicts with the country of inhabitancy and with other ethnic groups in that country. Further, it may also generate extreme nationalist movements. To avoid this situation, Zhou suggests that states should create such conditions so that the cross-border ethnic groups would draw closer the national culture and society to create a state of "peaceful transnational living" (*heping kuaju*).¹⁷⁹ This was a new practical discourse which linked border people to the centre, while allowing cross-border activities within an approved realm. This model has gained interest even at the national level, as, for example Zhou Jianxin has received national-level financing for further research on the subject.¹⁸⁰ However, from

¹⁷⁶ Hao Shiyuan 2003, 3.

¹⁷⁷ Cao Xing, 1999, 10-11.

¹⁷⁸ Zhou Jianxin, 2002, 275

¹⁷⁹ English translation from the book *Zhongguo xibei kuaguo minzu wenhua bianyi yanjiu*. Ma Manli et al 2003.

¹⁸⁰ Zhou Jianxin, 2004.

personal experience, it would seem that the concept is not yet widely known nor accepted among Chinese researchers.¹⁸¹

Under the condition of "peaceful transnational living", cross-border relations are dense and active, but not harmful to the state.¹⁸² In "peaceful transnational living", cross-border ethnic groups are engaged in cultural and economic cross-border activities, and also enthusiastically participate in activities arranged by government and popular associations.¹⁸³ Cultural and economic activities alone do not create this condition, but integration in the local state and society provide the crucial component. When assessing the eventual existence of this condition, three criteria are important, viz: the effective control of the state over the ethnic group, that the ethnic group stands behind the state and does not pursue independence, and the harmonious coexistence of the various cross-border ethnic groups.¹⁸⁴ According to Ma Manli, this model is suitable for the settlement of the *kuajie minzu* problem. In order to create this condition, the state should provide preferential policies to areas inhabited by cross-border ethnic groups, aid development of the economy of these areas and create a multilayered economic structure of mutual dependence and support.¹⁸⁵

Li Hongjie, who is affiliated with the research department of the national level *Minwei*, distances himself from the excessive politicalization of cross-border ethnic groups and emphasizes the opportunities rather than threats inherent in them. He maintains that the *kuajie minzu* problem is not only a product of the local socio-economic conditions in the border regions, but is also related to the self-definition of the state. Writing on Northeast China, he states that the main problem there is that Japan and South Korea are wealthier than China, resulting in fears that the ethnic groups may become attached to these richer countries rather than the economically weaker China. However, Li Hongjie did not regard this as a significant problem and proposed a more positive approach on that. China should emphasise that, although it is a developing country, it is at the same time a great country: it has a large

¹⁸¹ Discussion with a Chinese delegation which included researchers on the history of Chinese borders. The researchers were from Beijing, Gansu and Xinjiang. The previously mentioned Professor Ma Dazheng was one member of the delegation. 2006, Turku, Finland.

¹⁸² Zhou Jianxin 2002, 280.

¹⁸³ *Xinhuaawang Guangxi pindao* 27 February 2003.

¹⁸⁴ Zhou Jianxin 2002, 299.

¹⁸⁵ Ma Manli et al 2003, 241.

population and territory, and a great history and culture. For these reasons the international community cannot neglect it and China should not feel inferior because of its underdeveloped economy, but rather feel proud and self-secure. In his view, in a self-secure great China, ethnic minorities would also feel proud of being Chinese nationals. More importantly, a self-secure China would also trust its ethnic minorities and their allegiance to the country. From this basis, Li Hongjie further advised that the question of cross-border ethnic groups should be de-politized. Naturally, a certain amount of sensitiveness is required, because the issues of border security and national unity are involved, but in general, too much sensitivity and politization is negative to the stability for border regions. In his view, a self-assured China can afford a more relaxed and less political approach to its cross-border ethnic groups.¹⁸⁶ However, his conclusions were based on the specific circumstances of Northeast China, and it is uncertain whether he would also apply the same approach to western China.

Cao, Li and Ma all argue that economic factors are crucial to avoid cross-border ethnic problems and maintain stability. Cross-border economic activities are also regarded as important in the "ethnic work" (*minzu gongzuo*).¹⁸⁷ Cross-border ethnic ties help to invigorate the economy of cross-border ethnic groups, and develop their society. However, Chinese studies lack an insight into the development opportunities embedded in cross-border ethnic groups. With few exceptions, the studies on cross-border ethnic minorities either concentrate on the political aspects of cross-border ethnic groups or describe existing forms of their small-scale cross-border economic activities.

Chinese studies on cross-border economic activities reiterate that traditional ties, common language, culture and habits create a natural basis for border-crossing economic activities. In China, simple border trade has gradually expanded into exchanges of technical skills, labour export, project contracting, transshipping trade and transit trade. Thus, as Jin Chunzi has noted, cross-border ethnic groups can often act as bridges in the economic cooperation across the neighbouring countries.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Li Hongjie 2001, 50-51.

¹⁸⁷ Li Hongjie 2001, 51; Li Shaoming & Yang Jianwu 2000, 13.

¹⁸⁸ Jin Chunzi 1995, 24; Shen Xu 1998, 160.

The Yunnanese researcher, Shen Xu, has distinguished different types of cross-border economic activities, viz: border market places (*bianmin hushi*), specific festivals and private visits as common sites and occasions for cross-border trade. Additionally, some traditional patterns of cross-border barter trade and trade in unofficial market places still exist. He makes a specific reference to ethnic trade (*minzu maoyi*) which refers to trade in some ethnically specific products such as clothes, and of ethnic minority entrepreneurs who run small shops in the border cities. In addition, he mentions that border inhabitants are engaged in business as middlemen. Irregular trade practices such as smuggling and drugs trafficking are also part of the illegal cross-border trade.¹⁸⁹ Another kind of categorization was provided by professor Bai Zhensheng of the Central University of Nationalities. In the realm of border trade, he distinguishes between regional trade (*difang maoyi*) at province-level, small-scale trade (*xiao'e maoyi*) in the vicinity of the border, port trade (*kouan maoyi*) which is local but more institutionalized than the small-scale trade, and lastly barter trade at border markets (*bianmin hushi*).¹⁹⁰ Combining these different types of border trade activities, one could synthesize them into monetary trade and non-monetary barter trade, which are conducted by mobile cross-border traders, at market places and by companies.

I have found only one study which discusses how these cross-border contacts could be mobilized by local officials for local economic development. The Chinese Korean researcher, Cui Faming, discussed ways in which some localities in Northeast China have utilized cross-border ethnic contacts for the local economic development. He emphasised the role of cross-border ethnic groups as bridges. Some cities have encouraged private individuals to act as middlemen in spreading information about their home region to attract investments and donations. In some cases, liaison activities had been supported by the arrangement of festivals with specific characteristics and by producing PR-material which was distributed to neighbouring countries when visiting relatives. He mentions that bureaus of tourism and culture, as well as bureaus related to ethnic affairs, could be important in the arrangement of liaison activities. Although not mentioned in his article, some of the activities he proposed seemed comparable with overseas Chinese work and "people's diplomacy".¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Shen Xu 1998, 132-139.

¹⁹⁰ Bai Zhensheng 1990, 10.

¹⁹¹ Cui Faming 1995.

Cui Faming affirms that these activities have brought clear benefits for the local economies. However, while encouraging these kinds of popular activities, he emphasises that people should also receive education in patriotism and the rules of foreign affairs. This would help ordinary people to overcome narrow ideas of democracy, so that they are better able to handle foreign affairs from the perspective of the whole nation. In this way, they would also be able to repulse foreign hostile forces whose aim was to split China through peaceful means.¹⁹² Thus, cross-border economic activities could hardly be encouraged without a concurrent emphasis on ideological and political education.

Zhang Beiping, a staff member of the Ethnic Affairs Commission in Guizhou province, proposed a wide range of liaison activities in his article on public relations work in ethnic minority regions. He stretched the prevailing small-scale, low-level approach into many new directions. Firstly, he directly equated this type of work with overseas Chinese affairs. Secondly, he expanded the potential of this type of work even into the realm of higher level business, academia and culture, stating that through exchanges it is possible to transfer investments, new technology and scientific knowledge to those areas inhabited by ethnic minorities. Thirdly, in addition to ethnic cross-border ties, he also cited religious ties as an advantage too, giving as an example those ties between Chinese Muslims and the Arab countries. This article stimulated interest even at the national level *Minwei* and it brought Zhang an award for excellent research on minority policies.¹⁹³

In sum, the political connotations of cross-border ethnic groups have received more attention than compared with their economic benefit. The studies on economic cross-border activities pay attention to small-scale activities. This is in contrast with the research conducted within the realm of overseas Chinese studies.

Two New Concepts: The Ethnic Minority Overseas Chinese and The New Migrants

China has a long tradition of administering and engineering the foreign contacts of its population, partly through the official organs responsible for overseas Chinese affairs and partly through the less official “people’s diplomacy”. These practices have been extended to

¹⁹² Cui Faming 1995, 22

¹⁹³ Zhang Beiping 1993, 3-8; Guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui 1996.

ethnic minority populations too, in order to absorb resources for new development strategies. Another aim has been to strengthen the control over cross-border activities.

Unfortunately, the research related to these activities is complicated by the terms which are traditionally used in relation to overseas Chinese and their relatives in China: *huaqiao*, *huaren*, *qiaojuan*, *qiaobao* and *guiqiao*. The term overseas Chinese (*huaqiao* or *huaren*) usually refers to people of Chinese descent but who live outside China, the majority of whom are in Southeast Asia, and the USA. Most of these have their roots in the two coastal provinces of Guangdong and Fujian. The largest group of overseas Chinese, in conventional terms, are the Han Chinese. Other ethnic minorities have seldom been associated with the term "overseas Chinese". The difference between *huaqiao* and *huaren* is that the latter has taken foreign citizenship while the former remains a national of China. *Qiaobao* and *qiaojuan* are domestic relatives of overseas Chinese while the *guiqiao* are returned former overseas Chinese. However, during the recent years, there have been attempts to broaden these traditional notions of overseas Chinese. Nowadays, both ethnic minorities and new migrants who have left China since 1978, have been incorporated into the category of overseas Chinese. Some researchers now use the term "ethnic minority overseas Chinese" (*shaoshu minzu huaqiao huaren*) to refer to members of China's ethnic minorities living abroad.¹⁹⁴

To understand why the terms relating to overseas Chinese are used in connection with ethnic minorities, it is important to distinguish between the official and the every-day meaning of the term. Officially, these "*qiao*"-terms are used to categorize people for administrative purposes. With the help of the categories, cadres have been able to manipulate overseas contacts for topical political goals, the most important of which has been attraction of remittances and investments.¹⁹⁵ Through these categorizations, the relatives of overseas Chinese have received special treatment. Conversely, the overseas Chinese have been mobilized by local governments for economic purposes. The usage the "*qiao*"-terms in connection with China's ethnic minorities arouses surprise among the Chinese who are not used to associating ethnic minorities as overseas Chinese.¹⁹⁶ However, for practical administrative purposes it is logical.

¹⁹⁴ This term should not be confused with "overseas ethnic minority Chinese" (*haiwai shaoshu minzu huaren*), which refers to the overseas Chinese who live as a minority in their country of residence.

¹⁹⁵ Fitzgerald 1972, 6, 7, 53.

¹⁹⁶ Interviews 2003.

In order to clarify the connotations of the term *huaqiao*, it is helpful to explore the usage of the term here. Prior to the 19th century, those who left China were generally regarded as traitors and the state blatantly ignored them. However, in the late 19th century it became necessary for China to take an official stand on Chinese people living abroad, when the ruling dynasty and its opponents realized the political and economic potential of overseas Chinese. Since then Chinese governments have remained interested in utilizing its overseas resources.¹⁹⁷ The term *huaqiao*¹⁹⁸ was taken into official use to refer to Chinese people living in foreign countries.

The scope of the overseas Chinese work has gradually widened. During the 1980s, the target of the overseas Chinese work was the *huaqiao*, who were Chinese nationals. However, in 1989 this work was extended to include also the *huaren*, who possessed a foreign citizenship.¹⁹⁹ In the mid-1990s, a new category was incorporated into the work: the "new migrants" (*xin yimin*). In general, the term "new migrant" refers to these Chinese, who have left the country after the inauguration of reform policies in 1978. The numbers published on new migrants by the *Qiaoban*, put together students and those who have left China on work contract, family-sponsored or investor-immigrant visas, as well as irregular migrants.²⁰⁰ Thus, the *Qiaoban* has categorized both skilled and unskilled labour migrants as new migrants, regardless of whether they are regular or irregular migrants. The common denominator for these different groups has been, in the eyes of the *Qiaoban*, their strive towards modernity, in contrast with the "traditional" Chinese diaspora.²⁰¹

The shift from overseas Chinese towards new migrants proceeded in two phases. The emergence of the "new migrant" discourse can be traced back to the late 1980s.²⁰² At that time, the focus of the overseas Chinese work started to shift from returnees and dependants towards both overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*) and ethnic Chinese living abroad (*huaren*). This enabled the *Qiaoban* to attract investments, remittances and donations from a larger community, also to

¹⁹⁷ Wang [1991] 1995, 7, 8

¹⁹⁸ *Hua* broadly means Chinese culture, and *qiao* a sojourner. Until the mid-19th century, the term *huaqiao* had referred to temporary residence anywhere, even within China. Wang [1991] 1995, 226.

¹⁹⁹ Thunø 2001, 921.

²⁰⁰ Tanaka, referred in Nyíri 2001, 636.

²⁰¹ Thunø 2001, 922.

²⁰² Nyíri 2001, 636.

handle the liaison work directly, without any intermediaries, i.e. dependants and returnees. The second shift took place in the late 1990s, as China became more integrated into the world economy and investments and remittances from "old" emigrants became less important. In contrast, international exchanges in the high-technology sector and the internationalization of Chinese companies, became the new priority. Students and professionals served this goal better than members of the old diaspora.²⁰³ The term "new migrant" was probably used officially for the first time in 1995, when the national level Overseas Chinese Affairs Office issued a document on "new migrant work".²⁰⁴

In addition to this economic rationale, the shift also has political reasons. The declared modernity of the new migrants contrasts with the old emigrants whose allegiances to China carry the flavour of the "old China". This new approach makes the acceptance of otherwise politically challenging pre-1949 practices, unnecessary. Although these new migrants are tied to China on the basis of shared ethnicity, their allegiances are also evoked within the discourse of patriotism and modernity.²⁰⁵ In fact, as Xiang Biao has proposed, closer relations between the overseas Chinese communities and the Chinese government seem to be an overall trend. This tendency is not only supported by the Chinese official initiative, but the Chinese communities are also interested in establishing closer relations with the official China.²⁰⁶ Even in the sphere of international relations the new migrants were less problematic. They did not provoke questions of nationality and political allegiance as did the old diaspora, which had challenged China's relations with Southeast Asian countries.²⁰⁷

The definition of overseas Chinese has also expanded into another direction. It is possible to discern a new interest in including even the ethnic minorities into the category of overseas Chinese. As mentioned earlier, the term *huaqiao* has generally been applied only to the Han Chinese. An exception to this was Sun Yatsen's approach. He maintained that the Chinese nation consists of five ethnic groups and the non-Han groups residing abroad during his time were regarded as a part of the overseas Chinese community.²⁰⁸ As a consequence of many

²⁰³ Xiang 2003, 27.

²⁰⁴ Zhuang 2000, 247, note 1.

²⁰⁵ Thunø 2001, 927, 928.

²⁰⁶ Xiang 2001, 28.

²⁰⁷ Thunø 2001, 922.

²⁰⁸ Nyíri, 2002, 210. The five ethnic groups: the Han, the Manchus, the Mongols, the Muslims, the Tibetans.

waves of migration from different parts of China to foreign countries during the past century, substantial numbers of members of China's ethnic minorities have also migrated abroad. In order to claim control over them, a new specific term "ethnic minority overseas Chinese" (*shaoshu minzu huaqiao huaren*) has been taken into usage. This term was first applied in 1986²⁰⁹ but became more frequently used only some fifteen years later. This can be linked to the opening up of China's border regions and the development program of the western regions (*Xibu dakaiifa*). All resources available were needed to promote the development of these poor regions. Overseas linkages, which had played a central role in the coastal region, were mobilized even in the western parts of the country. The application of the term has also political reasons. China wants to control the activities of its Uighur and Kazakh nationals in bordering countries, where some of them are accused of participation in separatist activities. By categorizing them as overseas Chinese, China can emphasize their attachment to China and, to some extent, justify retaining authority over them.

With regard to "ethnic minority overseas Chinese", the administrative usage and economic implications of this term is emphasised by the fact that the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, has financed a research project on the topic.²¹⁰ With the Ethnic Affairs Commission also being interested in this particular project, the administrative aspect of this new term becomes evident.²¹¹

The parallel usage of the "*qiao*"- and "*kua*"-terms makes the studies complicated. The usage of these different terms can partly be traced to different academic fields. In the field of ethnic studies and social sciences, the "*kua*"-terms have been used regularly, and the overseas Chinese have been just one example of the *kuaguo minzu*, transnational ethnic groups. The term "ethnic minority overseas Chinese" does not appear in ethnic studies. The "*qiao*"-terms have been used among researchers in overseas Chinese studies.²¹² Thus, it might be surmised, that the "*kua*"-terms are more universal, while "*qiao*"-terms imply a China-centred approach.

²⁰⁹ Li Anshan 2003.

²¹⁰ Wang Lian 2003.

²¹¹ Interview 1, Beijing 2004.

²¹² Li Anshan 2003.

Using the *qiao*-terms, emphasis on the close link between foreign people and China can be made while downplaying the eventual foreign linkages. In this discourse, there is no place for foreign countries which claim allegiance with China's ethnic minorities. A clear example of the one-directional character of the *qiao*-discourse is the fact that the term *chaoqiao*, overseas Korean, is not included in the politically approved vocabulary on China's Korean nationality. China has taken the right to claim a special relationship with overseas Chinese, but it is out of the question that ethnic minorities in China could have a comparable *qiao*-relationship with a foreign country.

According to Xiang Dayou, one way to identify ethnic minority overseas Chinese, is to identify whether they lived in their country of residence when it was established. For example, when Mongolia declared independence from China in 1921, Mongolians then residing in Mongolia, are not classified as overseas Chinese. Conversely, those Chinese Mongols who migrated there after the establishment of an independent Mongolia, are considered ethnic minority overseas Chinese.²¹³ According to this same rationale, those ethnic Korean Chinese citizens who moved to South or North Korea after the establishment of these two separate countries in 1948, can be regarded as overseas Chinese. In some of the tables listing ethnic minority overseas Chinese, Koreans also are mentioned. However, they are not included in all tables, probably because of their small estimated number.²¹⁴ Clearly, these tables do not include the current day Chinese Korean migrant workers in South Korea, but only those who moved to North or South Korea during an earlier period, or to the Soviet Union.

Within the field of ethnic studies, the cross-border economic activities of ethnic minorities have, in general, been described as involving traditional small-scale trade activities, and not foreign investments or international trade. However, in the field of overseas Chinese studies, the approach is different. Here ethnically-based FDI and international trade also come into discussion. However, ethnic minority research conducted within this field of study is still

²¹³ Xiang Dayou 1993, 17.

²¹⁴ Li Anshan (2003) and Xiang Dayou (1993) mention Koreans in their tables on ethnic minority overseas Chinese. The tables indicate that the number of Korean ethnic minority overseas Chinese in South Korea and North Korea number less than 100 in each country. A table provided by the Overseas Chinese Documentation Center of the Jinan university did not contain any Koreans at all. Jinan daxue huaqiao huaren wenxian xinxi zhongxin 2004.

marginal. A combination of these two approaches would give a more comprehensive picture of the potential embedded in the transnational ethnic links of China's ethnic minorities.

Conclusions

This chapter has assessed China's border regions and cross-border ethnic groups so as to provide a context for the analysis of transnational ethnic capital transfers. The People's Republic of China has paid specific attention to the projection of her multiethnic border regions, as historically and nationally integral parts of China. Because of their political character, academic discussions of cross-border ethnic groups in China have been permeated by political and security considerations. However, there have also been recent attempts among academics and officials to moderate the political aspect of the cross-border ethnic ties, and instead shift attention to the possibilities of peaceful transnational living and for ethnic minorities having pride at being citizens of China. The writers on cross-border ethnic groups have stressed the importance of economic development for the stability of border regions. Differences in their views lie in the extent to which the cross-border economic relations could be allowed to develop. Because of the diverse political-historical conditions in China's border regions, the rationale to strike the right balance between permitting and restricting cross-border activities, would undoubtedly vary regionally. The conceptualization of the economic potential of cross-border ethnic minorities also varied between different academic fields. In ethnic studies, many researchers saw the main development opportunities in small-scale trade practices in the vicinity of the border, while in the overseas Chinese studies, ethnically-based investments and large-scale trade were also considered to represent significant potential.

This chapter has also demonstrated how, since the early 1980s, China's border regions have been transformed from national to transnational areas. In Yanbian, interactions with North Koreans were already possible in 1982, but the relations with the economically more attractive South Korean were restricted until the establishment of official Sino-South Korean ties in 1992. Thus, the opening up of Yanbian was relatively delayed when compared with other areas.

3. "OVERSEAS CHINESE WORK" WITH KOREAN CHARACTERISTICS

The Development of Yanbian's Foreign Economic Relations

Despite the lack of any official relations between the two countries, direct trade between China's coastal provinces and South Korea had already flourished by the late 1980s. The indirect trade commenced around the time for Asian games in Seoul in 1986, when China sent a team to participate in the games, which manifested its changed attitude towards South Korea. The first South Korean investments were located in southern China. A second sports event, the Seoul Olympic Games 1988, marked again the start of a new period, when direct trade between the two countries begun and the focus of South Korea investments moved northward, mainly to Shandong and Liaoning provinces, adjacent to South Korea.²¹⁵ Premier Li Peng gave official approval to these practices by referring to the principle of "the separation of politics from economy" (*zhengjing fenli*).²¹⁶

However, although Yanbian had the advantage of an ethnic Korean population, Yanbian did not receive much South Korean investment in the late 1980s. Border trade with North Korea was restored in 1982, but direct trade with South Korea was restricted in Jilin and Heilongjiang until 1990. The first direct South Korean investment was made in Heilongjiang in 1989 and in Jilin in 1990.²¹⁷ A partial explanation for this lies in the particular features of the economy and the history of China's northeastern regions. For example, to protect the local inefficient state-run industries, conservative party officials wanted to limit foreign economic penetration there. Economic cooperation was restricted for political reasons, too. In particular, Japanese and South Korean investments provoked concern. Japanese investments could revive memories of prior Japanese domination of the area and, further, Beijing feared that increasing cooperation with South Korea would disrupt the delicate political balance on the Korean Peninsula.²¹⁸ South Korean investments were also a sore point for China's ally North

²¹⁵ Zhang Baoren 1994, 77.

²¹⁶ Liu Feng 1989, 328.

²¹⁷ Guo Li 2004, 1, 29-30; Jin Chengnan 1998, 4, 61; Zhongguo Jilinwang 2006; Jilinsheng qingwang 2006b.

²¹⁸ Liu Feng 1989, 331.

Korea.²¹⁹ Thus, while allowing trade relations to expand elsewhere in China, the central government did not permit the northeastern provinces to draw closer to South Korea. Yanbian especially, was left outside economic relations with South Korea due to its close political and ethnic relationship with North Korea. In this way, Beijing used Yanbian as a political pledge to assure North Korea of China's support.

In 1983, on his way from Heilongjiang to Beijing, Deng Xiaoping interrupted his journey in Yanbian to meet with local leaders. During his stay, he wrote inscription calligraphy where he encouraged the local government to develop Yanbian faster and better (*ba Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizou jianshe de geng kuaixie geng haoxie*). Even though the central government had not yet decided upon the opening up of border regions, the inscription came to provide important backing for the forthcoming attempts to develop and open up Yanbian. For example, the calligraphy was reprinted in many books and the text reiterated in the work reports of the government, and publications dealing with Yanbian's economic development.²²⁰ A retired official recalled that

*"Comrade Xiaoping's inscription has carried weight up to our days. The central government has taken care of us according to its spirit. We are completely convinced of that."*²²¹

In 1984, the Regional Autonomy Law was enacted in China. The following year the detailed local regulations on the local autonomy of Yanbian were issued allowing Yanbian the right to take the initiative in issues related to the development of the local economy. Yanbian was the first autonomous prefecture in China to attain its own rules on local autonomy,²²² reflecting the special position of it among China's other autonomous prefectures. In practice, the new law meant that local companies were cut off from the direct leadership of the province. Instead, the local prefectural government was now able to decide, within the general

²¹⁹ Roy 1998, 103.

²²⁰ For example, the calligraphy was reprinted in Jin Shulian & Min Guangdao eds. *Bianchui shinian (1978-1988)*, Yanji:Yanbian renmin chubanshe, 1988;and in Wen Longji ed. *Jianshezhong de quanguo mofan zizhizhou – Yanbian*, Yanji: Yanbian renmin chubanshe, 1994. The text reiterated in the work report of the government in 1988. Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 1988.

²²¹ Interview 6, Yanbian 2005.

²²² Guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui 2006a.

framework given by the province, how to develop the local economy. In addition to the new law, the central government also granted autonomous areas some preferential policies such as funds for the improvement of the infrastructure. In Yanbian, for example, these funds were used to construct roads, railways and upgrade the airport. On the basis of these changes, the economy of Yanbian began to ameliorate.²²³ This policy change was of great importance for the border regions. At the same time, in 1985, China's reforms shifted from an emphasis on rural to urban economy reform. These new policies were even reflected in Yanbian. Supported with the preferential policies its industrial production increased by 18 percent annually.²²⁴ Until 1985, only the natural protection area on the Changbai Mountain was open to foreigners, but between 1985 and 1988, the administrative areas of Yanbian were, one after another, allowed by the central government to receive foreign visitors.²²⁵

In the latter part of the 1980s, the Yanbian elite was divided into two camps, one opposed to any contact with South Korea, and the other favouring opening up to South Korea and other capitalist countries.²²⁶ The pro-South Korea camp found support in a regional attempt²²⁷ to lobby the central government to grant Northeast China preferential trade policies. Both of these groups probably included Han Chinese as well as Koreans. It can be assumed that, in addition to Koreans with close personal ties to North Korea, the pro-North Korea group also included people who attached great importance to the political ties with North Korea. The pro-South Korean group probably consisted of economically oriented Koreans and Han Chinese. Thus, it was not only the national-level policies, but also local political factions, which hindered the opening-up of Yanbian.

²²³ Interview 2, Yanbian 2005.

²²⁴ Che Zhejiu 1994, 23.

²²⁵ Sun Xingbiao 2001, 53.

²²⁶ The existence of these two camps is clearly reflected in some research reports and other types of publications from the late 1980s. They were written by the proponents of opening up toward South Korea. They accused leftist influence and "some cadres" from preventing the establishment of closer ties with South Korea. E.g. Wan Xin et al. eds (1989). *Zhongguo dongbei diqu tong Dongbeiya guojia jingji guanxi*; 'Dongbeiya yanjiu' Ketizu (1990). *Zhongguo dongbei diqu tong Dongbeiya guojia jingji guanxi jiqi fazhan qushi*; Sui Xilin et al. eds (1989). *Fazhanzhong de Yanbian*.

²²⁷ In the 1980s, some Chinese economists proposed regional cooperation as a defensive response to the coastal strategy. One of these economic regions was the Great Northeast Asian Circle. Christoffersen 1993, 133.

The Reinvention of Ethnic Korean Links

As Yanbian took its first cautious steps to create trade relations and cooperation with capitalist countries, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, local and regional research reports and publications contained many references to foreign Korean ties which could be mobilized to support local development.²²⁸ Compiled by the supporters of the pro-South Korean camp, they highlighted the wished-for basis on which the Korean economic networks were to be founded. In these books, ties with foreign Koreans were presented as a local advantage in enhancing foreign trade, and attracting foreign investments and advanced technology to the area. These ties were also seen as useful in advancing tourism and, in principle, labour exports, but the main emphasis was placed on trade and investments.

At the most general level, the publications presented these interpersonal ties and shared ethnic backgrounds as an advantage to attract foreign Korean business people. In the late 1980s, when contacts with capitalist countries were still a politically sensitive topic, the texts referred vaguely to “certain feelings” (*yizhong ganqing*) and “this or that kind of relations” (*gezhong huo nazhong guanxi*) which foreign Koreans had towards Northeast China because of its large Korean population.²²⁹ A more sensitive term, “ethnic affection” (*minzu ganqing*) was also advanced as one of the reasons why foreign Koreans were interested in the area.²³⁰ In a more detailed manner, some articles pointed out that the special relationship between Yanbian and the Korean Peninsula relied on a human one based on kinship and blood relations (*qinshu xueyuan*) and on the friendly affections of the same ethnic people (*tongzu*)²³¹, or of a cross-border ethnic group (*kuajing minzu*)²³². In addition to ethnic ties in general, also a common language, history, culture and values were said to be promoting economic cooperation between China's Koreans and foreign Koreans.²³³

²²⁸ E.g. Wan Xin et al. eds (1989). *Zhongguo dongbei diqu tong dongbeiya guojia jingji guanxi*; Sui Xilin et al. eds (1989). *Fazhanzhong de Yanbian*; Jin Shulian & Min Guangdao eds (1988). *Bianchui shinian (1978-1988)*.

²²⁹ These expressions were clearly edited before going to print. The characters were not in line and they were laid more sparsely than other characters. Thus, more detailed characterizations of ethnic Korean ties were censored even in an internal report, which aptly illustrates their sensitiveness. Zhang Ying 1989, 250; Dou Zhangwu 1989, 224, 228; 1990, 152.

²³⁰ Feng Wen & Jin Meihua 1989, 643, 644.

²³¹ Liu Feng 1989 327.

²³² Che Zhejiu 1990, 9.

²³³ *Ibid.* 9.

Foreign Koreans whose life histories were connected to Yanbian, were also regarded as a force to channel investments and trade. In one article, it was reported that many foreign Koreans had a pressing need to visit their home place in Yanbian and meet their relatives there. The writers even noted that these Koreans also wished to contribute to Yanbian's development through their own efforts.²³⁴ In order to emphasize the strong ties which some foreign Koreans had with Yanbian, one author used the Chinese term *guxiang*, i.e. ancestral home town. He stated that "people all over the world who are born in or lived part of their life in Yanbian regard the area as a second ancestral home place (*di er guxiang*)".²³⁵

The writers also draw clear parallels with overseas Chinese networks that had channelled significant economic contributions to the home regions of the overseas Chinese on China's southern coast. In these paragraphs that dealt with advantageous human resources, overseas contacts with both ethnic Chinese and foreign Koreans were referred to in turn by the authors. One writer even described Yanbian as an important *qiaoxiang* of China's ethnic Koreans (*woguo chaoxianzu de zhongyao qiaoxiang*),²³⁶ a term which refers to the home regions of overseas Chinese.

Before the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in 1992, notions of interpersonal or ethnic ties with South Koreans were hard to find in Yanbianese publications and newspapers. In general, a public silence prevailed on even the existence of South Korea.²³⁷ Only after official relations were established was South Korea mentioned as being among the countries where Yanbian Koreans had relatives.²³⁸ Until 1992, South Korea was not even referred to in Yanbianese publications by its standard abbreviated Chinese name "*Hanguo*", but it was faded into the category of "regions", which usually referred to Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan.²³⁹ Yet, in 1990 South Korea began to appear in publications as

²³⁴ Feng Wen & Jin Meihua 1989, 643, 644.

²³⁵ An Husen 1989, 26.

²³⁶ Che Zhejiu, 1990, 9.

²³⁷ Liu Feng 1989 332.

²³⁸ See, e.g. Cui Longhe 1994, 220. An illuminating detail is that the day after the normalization of Sino-South Korean ties, the *Yanbian Ribao* provided a short introduction to South Korea. The article informed readers for example about the area, population and economic performance of South Korea. It was also admitted, that there had already been unofficial trade between the countries for some years. *Yanbian Ribao* 25 August 1992.

²³⁹ For example in references such as "trade relations exist with n number of countries and regions".

"*Nan Chaoxian*" which literally translates into southern Korea, while "*Chaoxian*" or "*Bei Chaoxian*" (northern Korea) stood for North Korea.²⁴⁰

To ascertain the number and circumstances of the foreign relatives of Yanbian Koreans, in the early 1990s, the local Ethnic Affairs Commission, *Minwei*, conducted a survey. Similar surveys had been done among Han Chinese by the Offices of Overseas Chinese Affairs, in Yanbian and elsewhere in China.²⁴¹ According to the Yanbian survey, 23 per cent of Korean households in Yanbian had close relatives abroad, of which nearly 50,000 lived in North Korea. In all 3,799 Yanbian Korean households had relatives in South Korea and 442 in other countries outside the Korean Peninsula. The survey not only counted the number of the relatives, but also noted their occupation.²⁴² Those 70 households, whose relatives according to the study were engaged in business with an estimated value of USD 1 million, were most probably asked to persuade their relatives to launch business activities in Yanbian.

A New Era Dawns

Changes in the regional political situation opened a new avenue for developments. In 1988, the newly elected president of South Korea, Roh Tae-woo, announced his "Nord Politik" policy, the principle of which, was to create contacts with communist countries, North Korea and China included. North and South Korea began to discuss the possibilities to continue Inter-Korean dialogue, which in the foregoing time in 1972, had come to a quick end.

The end of the cold war created further favourable conditions for negotiations, and their respective allies encouraged the two Koreas to sincerely engage in dialogue.²⁴³ As the impact of the Soviet Union on North Korea had decreased since the late 1980s, with the discontinuation of economic aid, China found more room of manoeuvre in the region. It developed closer ties with North Korea, and delayed the normalization of diplomatic ties with

²⁴⁰ "Nan Chaoxian" was used for example in Che & Lü & Jin 1990.

²⁴¹ Interview at the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, Yanbian, 2004.

²⁴² Jin Zhongguo 1994a, 249.

²⁴³ The dialogue culminated in the 1992 Basic Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation Between South and North Korea.

the South. This justified China's attempts to deepen unofficial economic relations with South Korea.²⁴⁴

Now, new winds began to blow. Plans for regional cooperation received new impetus. Not only were economic interests at stake, but the regional powers saw economic cooperation as a means to reduce the danger of a conflict on the Peninsula. The UNDP-backed Tumen River Area Programme was publicized in 1991 and its official inauguration took place in October 1992. The Tumen plan relied on the regional development schemes drafted since the mid-1980s. The political rationale of this Programme was to create a forum wherein North Korea could be engaged in a regional dialogue.²⁴⁵ The economic objective was to turn the Sino-Russian-North Korean border area surrounding the mouth of the Tumen River into a new international transportation hub, comparable to that of Singapore.²⁴⁶ China also established official relations with South Korea in 1992, which additionally highlighted China's shift in her Northeast Asian policy. Further, another major national level reposition occurred in 1992 when Deng Xiaoping made his famous Southern tour in February 1992. During his visit, he advanced the idea of renewed economic liberalization and fast-paced economic development. This trip marked the end of the conservative post-Tian'anmen period. The new policy received official sanction in the Fourteenth Party Congress convened in October 1992 which announced that China aimed to create a socialist market economy system.

In 1991, Jiang Zemin, the general secretary of the Party that time, visited Yanbian to prepare the prefecture for this change. Again, the respected visitor compressed his message into an

²⁴⁴ Jia Hao & Zhuang Qubing 1992, 1140. This article provides a good description of the regional political situation and China's regional policy of that time.

²⁴⁵ Olsen 1995, 63.

²⁴⁶ The member countries of the Tumen Programme are China, North Korea, South Korea, Russia and Mongolia. The Tumen Region, which is the actual area of cooperation, comprised The Rajin-Sonbong Economic and Trade Zone in North Korea, Yanbian in China, and Primorsky Territory in Russia. Additionally, the Eastern part of Mongolia is linked to the programme. The cooperation involves the following sectors: Investment and trade, environment, human resource development, tourism, transportation and telecommunications and energy. In addition to the UNDP, the Nordic countries and other UN organs have also contributed financially to the programme.

The Programme witnessed its peak in 1997, since when, the number of programmes and activities has significantly declined, even raising questions on the future of it. Regional political disputes and the weak commitment of the member states have been the main reasons for the fading vigour of the Programme. Nevertheless, in 2005, the member countries were able to reach a strategic action plan for the years 2006-2015. However, the impact of the Programme on regional economic cooperation has not been great. Although the different localities have been able to benefit from it in the terms of infrastructure building, regional cooperation within the realm of the Programme has remained limited.

encouraging calligraphy text. His inscription read: "Build Yanbian into a model prefecture for the whole country" (*ba Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizhou jianshe quanguo mofan de zizhizhou*).²⁴⁷ This prompted Yanbian to make considerable efforts to successfully inaugurate the Tumen Programme. Aware of the politically sensitive ethnic relations with foreign Koreans, campaigns for ethnic unity (*minzu tuanjie*) gained strong momentum in the effort to reach the standards of a model prefecture. In China, ethnic unity work aims to promote equality and unity among the nationalities, the common efforts of the nationalities to support China's prosperity, and also to safeguard the unity of China, for example, by counteracting separatist activities.²⁴⁸ At the onset of open door policies in Yanbian, the clear premise was that if ethnic unity did not prevail, "there is no political stability, no social stability, and it is not possible to do any job well".²⁴⁹ Maintenance of loyalty of the ethnic Koreans toward China, and the prevention of any ethnic separatist activities, was a basic precondition for the expansion of the transnational ethnic Korean ties and Yanbian wanted to demonstrate that it was worth of the centre's trust.

A row of prominent visits culminated in an inspection trip made by the premier Li Peng at the beginning of August 1992. His guideline, written in a calligraphy roll was: "Develop economy, vigorously promote Yanbian" (*Fazhan jingji, zhenxing Yanbian*). Two weeks later the Sino-South Korean diplomatic relations were established and in October, China, the two Koreas, Mongolia and Russia, agreed to launch the Tumen River Programme. Thus, Yanbian's position had changed from that of previously a closed backyard to a centre of international cooperation.

The number of open economic development areas expanded in Yanbian. The first zone of this kind was established in Hunchun in 1988, with the approval of the provincial government (Hunchun economic development area). In 1992 Hunchun was elevated into an open border city (*yanbian kaifang chengshi*) and border economic cooperation area (*bianjing jingji hezuo qu*). The same year Yanji City became an experimental city of comprehensive reform (*zonghe peitao gaige shidian lianxi chengshi*). Additionally, Yanji and three other cities were given the status of province level development area. Two years later, Yanbian was designated an

²⁴⁷ Wen Longji 1994.

²⁴⁸ Wu Shimin & Zhanbazhabu 1995, 143.

²⁴⁹ Jin Chengzhu 1991, 54.

autonomous prefecture reform and development experimental zone (*Minzu zizhizhou difang gaige kaifang shiyanqu*).²⁵⁰ The province of Jilin made Yanbian a central locality of its development plans. In 1993, the Party Conference of Jilin decided to launch a strategy to create a "developed border province adjacent to the sea" (*fada de bianjiang jinhai sheng*), where Yanbian played the central role of a port to the sea.²⁵¹

These political changes were reflected in Yanbian by a complete about-turn on policy towards South Korea, and on international orientation in general. North Korea was unhappy with these changes and Yanbian's trade with North Korea slumped.²⁵² China's relations with North Korea only fully recovered in 2001, when Jiang Zemin, China's paramount leader of that time, visited Pyongyang.²⁵³

From Suspicion to Utilization

How were these changes received at the local level? Local government work plans (*zhengfu gongzuo renwu*) from the late 1980s reflect the determination to expand international cooperation, but also highlight the obstacles encountered on the way. A mid-term plan issued in 1988 for the coming five years, announced a need for a complete restructuring of foreign relations. However, the work plan for the year 1988, publicized in the same report, did not make any special emphasis on foreign economic relations.²⁵⁴ That year, Yanbian was able to break further away from the provincial leash. In 1988, the government affiliated trade company received comprehensive international trade rights.²⁵⁵

In 1989, the official work report reflected the determination to expand foreign economic cooperation. It devoted one chapter to the activation of domestic and foreign trade, and put forward the establishment of a leaders' small group (*duiwai kaifang lingdao xiaozu*) and other additional administrative measures, to promote opening up. It also urged to harder work in the

²⁵⁰ Sun Xingbiao 2001, 53-54.

²⁵¹ Guanyu jianshe fada bianjiang jinhaizhou guihua de jianyi. Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 1993a, 235.

²⁵² North Korea was able to exact a bitter revenge in the voting for the host country of the 2004 Olympic Games, when China lost out to Greece by only one vote.

²⁵³ Interview 2, Yanbian 2005.

²⁵⁴ Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 1988.

²⁵⁵ Pei Ximin 1990, 21.

fields of foreign affairs, overseas Chinese work and tourism work. Emphasis was placed on cooperation with North Korea and the Soviet Union, with which China was in a process of normalizing its official ties²⁵⁶. Additionally, it encouraged economic and cultural exchanges with all the countries of the world, which certainly contained a hint on South Korea. The document made a specific mention of the importance to plan well the construction of an economic development zone in the city of Tumen and the opening of the Zhanglingzi trade port at the Sino-Soviet border.²⁵⁷

The work report of the year 1990 displayed impatience with the slow development of Yanbian's foreign economic relations. It complained that "certain advantageous conditions" were not fully utilized because of the lack of preferential policies and also that the work was not solid enough and deep-rooted, which was unusually critical language for this type of document. The "certain conditions" clearly pointed to the Korean ethnic ties with South Korea. In 1991, South Korea was mentioned by name (*Nan Chaoxian*) in the official work plan of the government for the first time. It urged the active development of unofficial trade with the country. The plan also announced that discipline in foreign affairs should be tightened, which implies that not everyone had the patience to wait for the establishment of official relations with South Korea.²⁵⁸ Clearly, the atmosphere was nervous and restive.

Yanbian's eighth five-year plan (1991-1995) was drafted during the year 1990, when the time schedule for the normalization of the Sino-South Korean relations was not yet clear. A document on the basic ideas of the five-year plan stated that utmost efforts should be taken in order to create the conditions for the development of direct business contacts with South Korea (*Nan Chaoxian*).²⁵⁹ Another document from 1990 on local development strategies referred to the active development of unofficial trade with South Korea as one of the main points of the government's work.²⁶⁰

The five-year plan was published in the local newspaper in 1992, one year after it had been launched. One of its six main points was the expansion of "opening up" and tourism. Under

²⁵⁶ The Sino-Soviet relations were normalized during President Gorbatschov's visit to Beijing in May 1989.

²⁵⁷ Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 1989.

²⁵⁸ Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 1990, 1991.

²⁵⁹ Xu Chuanxie 1990b, 30.

²⁶⁰ Xu Chuanxie 1990a, 9.

this point, it mentioned that Yanbian possessed advantageous human relations and "ethnic amorous feelings" (*minsu fengqing*) which were beneficial for the development of foreign trade and tourism. Yet, South Korea was not named either in this version of the five-year plan and nor in the annual plan for the year 1992, which was published in parallel. The annual plan for 1992 mainly emphasised border trade with North Korea and Russia. Possibly, there was no need to highlight South Korea at that time, as after the Tumen Programme had received the green light in late 1991, the prospects for the establishment of direct trade relations were good. The plan also identified project and labour export contracting as important fields of activity.

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After the political changes of 1992 had taken place, the tone of the plan was quite different in 1993. The very first point of it urged a liberation in thought and the adoption of the new concept "socialist market economy". In this spirit, the text encouraged people to bravely break from the old thinking:

*"We have to look afresh at the situation of our prefecture, fully look at all the advantageous conditions and huge potential for rapid economic development which our prefecture possesses, ..., bravely break the concepts of "sensitive region", "blind region" and "difficult region", created by restrictive forces, truly practise solid work and fasten the pace of economic development."*²⁶²

From this basis, the second point of the plan pushed safely for an omnidirectional expansion of the opening up and development of foreign trade. Cooperation with South Korea was now placed in the centre, although North Korea, Russia and Japan were mentioned in the plan, too. The aim was to attract investments, technology and talented personnel to Yanbian, through many different channels.²⁶³

In the following years, the plan reiterated the necessity to work harder towards the expansion of foreign trade and investments. Weak transportation infrastructure, the lack of a legal

²⁶¹ Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 1992a; No was South Korea mentioned in the ten-year plan of the prefecture. Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizhou jingji tizhi gaige shinian guihua he "bawu" gang'ao. Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 1992b, 207-217.

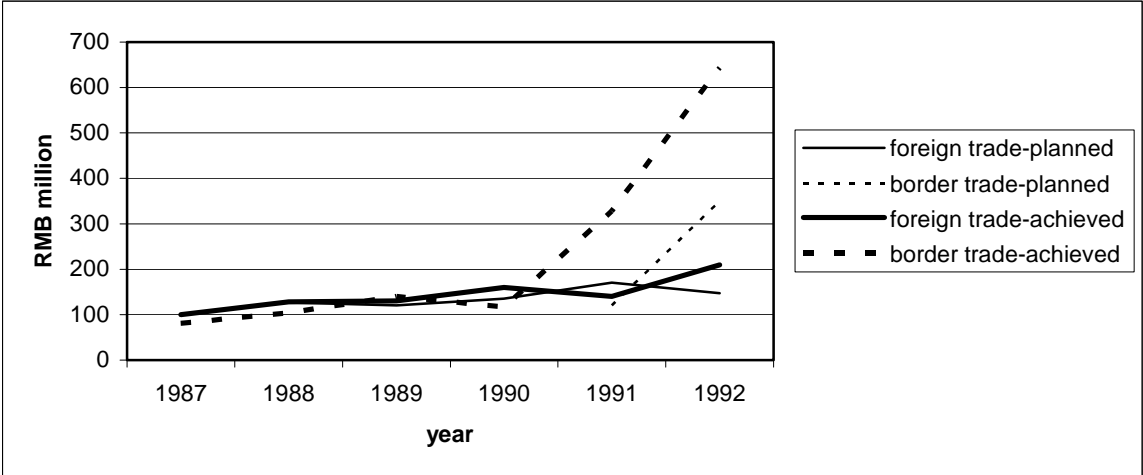
²⁶² Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 1993b.

²⁶³ Ibid.

framework and a deficient business environment, were also problems referred to in the plans. After 1993, the plans no longer mentioned unofficial business channels, but paid attention instead to the strengthening of formal business institutions.

From 1984 to 1992, Yanbian received occasional investments from South Korea indirectly through companies located in Hong Kong and Japan. Moreover, businesspeople mainly from Japan, Canada, the United States and Malaysia, invested in Yanbian during this period. Most of them, if not all, had an ethnic Korean background.²⁶⁴ In the early 1992, 86 foreign companies in all had invested in Yanbian and the prefecture had received USD 30.6 million in foreign direct investments.²⁶⁵ Figure 2 illustrates the development of Yanbian's foreign trade. The stark rise in border trade was due to the revival of border trade with the Soviet Union.

Figure 2. Foreign Trade and Border Trade in Yanbian 1987-1992, Plans and Results



Source: Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu. Zhengfu gongzuo baogao, various years. The figures for border trade years 1991 and 1992 are given in USD and calculated on the basis of the notified increase in trade from the previous year. However, if calculated on the basis of the official exchange rate (apx USD 1=RMB 5,5) the figures are much higher.

²⁶⁴ Interview 10, Yanbian 2005; Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizhouzhi difang bianzuan weiyuanhui 1996b, 1345-1348.

²⁶⁵ Huang Shuo 1997a, 361.

Important changes took place in 1997. The ninth five-year plan which took effect in 1997 paid attention for the first time to the emerged regional economic areas in China's neighbourhood.²⁶⁶ To support regional cooperation in the Northeast, the Tumen Programme was elevated to one of the key national projects of this period. In the same year, the Asian financial crisis broke, which exposed the deficiencies of Yanbian's South Korea -centred strategy. The end of the decade saw the emergence of a new multidirectional orientation, although South Korea still remained in the centre. The flagship of Yanbian, the Tumen Programme faced setbacks as the interest for it faded among the participating countries.²⁶⁷

The Organs in Yanbian Engaged in the Promotion of Ties with Foreign Koreans

Organs Engaged in Promotion of Ties with Co-ethnics and Relatives of the Han Chinese and Ethnic Minorities

Joseph Y.S. Cheng and King-Lun Ngok, experts on Chinese politics, have provided a practical term to identify the central organs, which relate to work with overseas Chinese. Their term “Organs Responsible for Overseas Chinese Affairs” (ORFOCA) includes Party and state bodies as well as mass organizations.²⁶⁸ The Party-affiliated organs central to overseas Chinese work are the United Front Work Department and the Overseas Friendship Association linked to it. The State Council hosts an Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs, and the National People’s Congress, as well as the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, have their respective Overseas Chinese Committees. In addition to these bodies, there are several related mass organizations and associations. One central mass organization is the Party-related All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese. The China Overseas Exchange Association was established in 1990, and it is linked to the governmental structures through its members. Its chairpersons and vice chairpersons are prominent figures in the administration of overseas Chinese affairs.²⁶⁹ The ORFOCA-structure is not same all over China. Although these bodies exist in all provincial units, except in some cases in Tibet, the

²⁶⁶ Report on the Outline of the Ninth Five-year Plan for national Economic and Social Development and the Long-range Objectives to the year 2010. *Beijing Review* March 1996.

²⁶⁷ Blanchard 2000, 288-290.

²⁶⁸ Cheng & Ngok 1999, 116.

²⁶⁹ Zhongguo qiaowang 2006.

number and type of mass organizations responsible for work with overseas Chinese on local level vary to a great extent.²⁷⁰

The question arises of whether it would be feasible to transfer the ORFOCA-term to Yanbian, and refer to “Organs Responsible for Foreign Korean Affairs”? As there is no institutionalized field such as “foreign Korean affairs” in Yanbian, this term is inappropriate, rather it would be more relevant to speak about “organs engaged in promoting ties with foreign Koreans”. In general, six different types of organs have mainly been in charge of the creation, maintenance and institutionalization of ethnic transnational ties, for the support of the economic development of ethnic minority regions in China, viz:

1) The State Council: The Overseas Chinese Affairs Offices (*Qiaowu bangongshi*) and the Ethnic Affairs Commissions (*Minzu shiwu weiyuanhui*, before 1998 *Minzu zongjiao shiwu weiyuanhui*).

2) The National People's Congress: The Ethnic, Overseas Chinese and Foreign Affairs Committee (*Minzu qiaowu waishi weiyuanhui*, abbr. *Minqiaowai wei*) of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress; and the Ethnic Affairs Committee (*Renda minzu weiyuanhui*) and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee (*Renda qiaowu weiyuanhui*) of the People's Congress.

3) The People's Political Consultative Conference: The Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee (*Minzu zongjiao weiyuanhui*, before 1998 *Minzu weiyuanhui*), and The Hong Kong – Macao – Taiwan Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee (*Xiang'aotaiqiao weiyuanhui*, before 1995 *Huaqiao weiyuanhui*).

4) The United Front Department of the Communist Party: The Working Department of Ethnic and Religious Affairs (*Minzu zongjiao gongzuo ju*), the Working Department of Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Overseas Affairs (*Xiang'aotai haiwai gongzuoju*) and the Department of the Overseas Friendship Associations (*Haiwai lianyihui*).

²⁷⁰ Cheng & Ngok 1999, 117, 127.

5) Semi-official associations (*banguan banmin*) established by government or Party organs.

6) Unofficial associations: a variety of which are more or less closely linked to government and party organs through interpersonal relations. These associations are approved by and registered at the local Departments of Civil Affairs. These kinds of associations are described in Chinese as popular organizations (*minjian zuzhi*) or popular associations (*minjian shetuan* or *tuanti*). As China still aims to control organized social activities, the term "non-governmental organization" is inappropriate for these Chinese associations, so that the term "unofficial association" would seem to be most suitable to describe them. Furthermore, these unofficial associations can be classified on the basis on how closely they are linked to local political elites through their members' interpersonal relationships, and thus I find it helpful to divide them into elite and popular associations.

In addition to these six larger entities, a myriad of educational and cultural institutions and private individuals have contributed to the expansion of the foreign contacts of their home region. All these activities come within the remit of the "people's diplomacy" (*minjian waijiao*), an unofficial aspect of China's diplomacy, providing flexible, alternative and supportive channels for its foreign relations. In order to create a wide basis for international exchanges, the "people's diplomacy" aims to reach new friends, spread information, and generally promote exchange in the areas of politics, the economy, science and technology, as well as education and culture.²⁷¹

Thus, the term "overseas Chinese work" cannot be directly applied to describe the liaison work with foreign Koreans. However, there have not been any serious official attempts to formulate a new term which would suit foreign Korean work. A retired Yanbian Korean cadre suggested the terms "People's diplomacy of the border area ethnic minorities" (*bianjiang shaoshu minzu minjian waijiao*) or "International public relations work of the border area ethnic minority" (*bianjiang shaoshu minzu guoji gonggong guanxi*). In some documents produced by the *Minwei*, the term "Ethnic foreign affairs work" (*minzu waishi gongzuo*) has been used to describe the dissemination of information on China's ethnic minorities to the international audience. The promotion of transnational ethnic ties can also be referred to as

²⁷¹ Zhang Beiping 1993, 6; Wang Fuchun 2003, 233-234; Wu Qinghe 1999.

"Liaison work with ethnic nationalities" (*haiwai minzu lianyi gongzuo*).²⁷² No doubt, as this type of work becomes more established, an official term will probably be approved in the future.

The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, *Qiaoban*

The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (Chinese abbreviation *Qiaoban*), overseen by the State Council has a nation-wide structure, and has a branch in every province except Tibet. Lower level offices have been set up in regions which are important home areas for overseas Chinese. In the People's Republic of China, these offices have traditionally worked with the overseas Han Chinese, and not those Chinese who are members of ethnic minorities.

However, it is possible to detect a new approach. In 2002, the State Council's Overseas Chinese Affairs Office sponsored academic reports on whether "ethnic minority overseas Chinese" (*shaoshu minzu huaqiao huaren*) should be included in the category of overseas Chinese and consequently in the *Qiaoban's* work.²⁷³ The reasons for this new interest are clear: the state wants to mobilize all available resources to successfully implement the Western Development Program (*Xibu dakaiifa*), for which the *Qiaoban* would provide a ready structure. At the same time, it could also serve as a method for surveillance of China's ethnic minorities resident abroad. This kind of extension of control is probably regarded as vital, for the central government suspects that some members of its ethnic minorities participate in pan-nationalistic and separatist activities in neighbouring countries. In the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, Chinese citizens who are members of an ethnic minority but reside abroad have already been included in the overseas Chinese work. According to some estimations, Xinjiang has over one million overseas Chinese, of which over 90 per cent are ethnic minority compatriots (*shaoshu minzu tongbao*).²⁷⁴

An introduction to the circumstances of overseas Chinese affairs in Xinjiang, described the specific features of the *Qiaowu* work in four points. Firstly, as most of the overseas

²⁷² Interview 1, Yanbian 2005; Guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui 2006b. Zhang Beiping 1993, 6. Author's own English translations.

²⁷³ Wang Lian 2003; Li Anshan 2003.

²⁷⁴ *Huaxia jingweiwang* 22 August 2003.

compatriots (*qiaobao*), their dependants (*qiaojuan*) and returned overseas Chinese (*guiqiao*) are members of ethnic minorities, the *Qiaowu* work has a specific feature of typical "ethnic minority work" (*minzu gongzuo*). Secondly, because most are Muslims, this work also has the characteristics of "religious work" (*zongjiao gongzuo*). Thirdly, the overseas circles are economically weak and many of the compatriots are poor. Fourthly, the situation is complex because the neighbouring countries are many, the borderline is long and cross-border ethnic groups are numerous.²⁷⁵

Because of these ethnic, religious and cross-border characteristics, the *Qiaowu* work has been particularly sensitive. An article in an electronic magazine for overseas Chinese, *Huaxia Jingweiwang*, emphasized that compared with other areas in China, the *Qiaoban* in Xinjiang needed to address the question of stability and tread cautiously when creating contacts.²⁷⁶ Furthermore, a member of the local People's Political Consultative Conference (*zhengxie*) and the chair of the Overseas Friendship Associations, noted in an interview that foreign Eastern Turkestan separatists try to enrol Xinjiangese *qiaobao* and *huaqiao* to fight against China. For this reason, it was extremely important to reinforce the local *Qiaowu* work and spread information among overseas ethnic minorities about actual conditions in China: in this respect, the responsibilities of the *Qiaowu* work were heavy. His statement about the current requirements of the Party-affiliated Overseas Friendship Associations is emblematic. He stated that they should, among other things, act as battlefields.

"The associations should strive for 'five haves': to have an organization, have ranks (duiwu), have funds, have a battlefield and have activities".²⁷⁷

Thus, the work of the Xinjiang *Qiaoban* has been rather restrained through fear from both sides. Officials must be wary so as not to create conditions for foreign infiltration. At the same time, they should attempt to disseminate pro-Chinese information in Central Asia, through the family connections of local ethnic minorities. This is not an easy task since those local people who have returned from, or have relatives abroad, are unwilling to register and

²⁷⁵ Zhongguo qiaolian xinxiwang 2004.

²⁷⁶ *Huajia jingweiwang* 22 August 2003.

²⁷⁷ *Xinjiang xinwenwang* 1 January 2002.

cooperate through fear for trouble.²⁷⁸ The *Qiaoban* of the Yunnan Province, too, promoted the exchanges between local ethnic minorities and their foreign relatives.²⁷⁹

In Yanbian, the *Qiaoban* was not involved in the mobilization or control of overseas ethnic Korean ties for business purposes, but rather concentrated on poverty alleviation among Chinese citizens who had returned from North Korea.²⁸⁰ Clearly, the foreign Koreans who were the target of Yanbian's liaison activities were hard to identify as overseas Chinese. Generally, overseas Chinese ties were rooted in a Chinese ancestral home village, *guxiang*. From this basis, the Chinese could claim a specific relationship with those Chinese living abroad, however, from the Korean point of view, the *guxiang* was not situated in China, but rather on the Korean Peninsula.

On a personal visit to the Yanbian *Qiaoban* office in 2004, the officials were aware of the inclusion of "new migrants" in overseas Chinese work elsewhere in China, yet, in 2004 the Yanbian *Qiaoban* did not deal with new migrants. However, in a newspaper interview in 2005, the head of the office stated that one of their five important tasks was the strengthening of the "new migrant work" (*xinyimin gongzuo*).²⁸¹ Although I have been unable to inquire about the contents of this work, it is feasible that this agenda had been pushed down to Yanbian from the higher echelons of the *Qiaoban*, as, for example, evidenced by the fact that the national level *Qiaoban* has shown interest in Yanbian Korean new migrants and their economic resources. In 2005, it compiled a report on Chinese Korean overseas migrants.²⁸² Further, possibly the Yanbian Korean migrants and foreign students will be gradually integrated into the work of the local *Qiaoban*, which would change the ethnic nature of its international liaison activities.

²⁷⁸ Zhongguo Qiaolian xinxiwang 2004; *Huajia jingweiwang* 22 August 2003.

²⁷⁹ The website of the Yunnan Province *Qiaoban* contained several texts on the liaison activities with the foreign relatives of the local ethnic minorities. Yunnansheng renmin zhengfu qiaowu bangongshi.

²⁸⁰ Interview at the *Qiaoban*, Yanbian, 2004.

²⁸¹ Zhongguo qiaowang 2005b.

²⁸² Cao Shanyu (2005). *Gaige kaifanghou dongbei sansheng chaoxianzu de haiwai yimin wenti chushen*.

The Ethnic Affairs Commission, *Minwei*

In some areas inhabited by ethnic minorities, the Ethnic Affairs Commission of the State Council (Chinese abbreviation *Minwei*) has been partly responsible for activities similar to those of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office. It has been in charge of liaison with China's ethnic minorities overseas, e.g. with assistance to visit or settle down in China, and to attract investments and other types of capital through them. *The Minwei* has also promoted foreign relations between ethnic minority regions and foreign countries,²⁸³ e.g. around the early 1990s, the national level *Minwei* had already urged its provincial and prefectural level units to promote foreign exchanges.²⁸⁴

In 1988, the national level *Minwei* established a Foreign Affairs Department (*waishisi*²⁸⁵) to promote the foreign relations of ethnic minority regions. Its main responsibilities were to assist ethnic minority regions to foster foreign relations and to aid cultural and trade associations from ethnic minority regions to organize visits to foreign countries. It also invited foreigners to visit these regions. The dissemination of information on ethnic minority regions fell within its tasks, too.

To support this work, the national level *Minwei* established several associations, which seemed to be active mainly at the national level. Such associations were, for example, the Association for Foreign Exchanges of China's Ethnic Minorities (*Zhongguo shaoshu minzu duiwai jiaoliu xiehui*), the Culture and Art Foundation of China's Ethnic Minorities (*Zhongguo shaoshuminzu wenhua yishu jijinhui*) and the Association for the Promotion of the Economic Cooperation of China's Ethnic Minorities (*Zhongguo minzu jingji hezuo cujinhui*).²⁸⁶

²⁸³ See the document "Important functions" of the provincial level *Minwei*'s, e.g. for Yunnan: Xinhuaawang Yunnan pindao 2006, for Xinjiang: Xinjiang zhengfu gongzhong xinxiwang 2006. Zhang Beiping 1993, 6.

²⁸⁴ Zhang Beiping 1993, 7.

²⁸⁵ Currently *guojisi*, the Department of International Affairs.

²⁸⁶ Zhang Beiping 1993, 7; Jilinsheng renmin zhengfu 2000; Interview 1 and 2 Yanbian 2005. My informants in Yanbian had not heard about these associations.

The official document on the important tasks of the provincial level *Minwei* in Jilin, lists international activities related to ethnic minorities, as one of its responsibilities. Point 10 in the document states that this particular *Minwei* should:

*"Organize and coordinate international exchange which is related to the field of ethnic work, assist in the spread of information about ethnic minorities to foreign countries, deal with issues related to, among others, Hong Kong S.A.R., Macao S.A.R. and Taiwan, and issues related to ethnic minorities who live abroad but return to China to visit relatives, travel or settle."*²⁸⁷

The Xinjiang *Minwei* was also assigned similar tasks, whereas according to the documents about its important duties published in the early 21st century, the respective office in Yunnan did not deal with foreign relatives of local ethnic minorities.²⁸⁸

The list of important functions of the Jilin *Minwei* also noted the development of ethnic economy as one of its main tasks, but the *Minwei* was only provided with a supportive role here. It was directed to conduct studies and assist in the formulation of suitable policies to promote the reform and opening up in ethnic minority areas, especially in border and impoverished regions. Compared with other areas, differences are again discernable when examining the abovementioned documents. In Yunnan, the economy section (*jingjichu*) of the provincial level *Minwei* is expected to attract investments, in addition to its general tasks to promote ethnic economy and alleviate poverty. In Xinjiang, the *Minwei*'s economy section is not assigned any tasks related to international trade.²⁸⁹

The similar document of the Yanbian *Minwei*, issued in 2001, did include the promotion of ethnic economy as its important tasks. Yet, its responsibilities extended mainly into the sphere of trade and promotion of ethnic minority products, such as traditional Korean instruments. It hosted an association of ethnic minority product enterprises, which traded in Korea-style products and it arranged an annual combined trade promotion and study excursion trip for

²⁸⁷ Jilinsheng renmin zhengfu 2000.

²⁸⁸ Xinjiang zhengfu gongzhong xinxiwang (2006). Xinhuaawang Yunnan pindao (2006).

²⁸⁹ Xinjiang zhengfu gongzhong xinxiwang (2006). Xinhuaawang Yunnan pindao (2006).

companies which produced Korean-style products.²⁹⁰ However, the actual work of trade promotion was left to the Department of Commerce. The *Minwei* also had a consultative role in the planning of preferential policies for ethnic minorities and for the well-being of border areas. In the early 1990s, the *Minwei* conducted a survey on the foreign relatives of local ethnic minorities, which was then utilized to create business networks. However, by 2004 the Yanbian *Minwei* was no longer preoccupied with the promotion of foreign business relations, but rather concentrated on ethnic questions and religion.²⁹¹ The work with Falungong and Christian activists kept the *Minwei* preoccupied.²⁹² In the directions for the *Minwei's* functions in Yanbian from 2001, foreign relations were only referred to in connection with the administration of foreign religious groups in Yanbian.²⁹³ As to other international activities, such as the management of the affairs of ethnic minorities who return from abroad, were not mentioned in the document.²⁹⁴

Other Official Actors

The Foreign Affairs Offices of local government units in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities have organized activities so as to mobilize ethnic networks for local economic development. They were also active in the establishment of friendship relations with cities, counties and prefectures elsewhere in the world. For example, the Foreign Affairs Office of Yanbian Prefecture and Yanji City had both indicated a civil servant who was in charge of these activities. Naturally, the Department of Commerce (prior to 1998, the Department of Trade and Economic Cooperation) also pursued the creation of links with potential investors. This Department had a specific section devoted for the promotion of foreign investments (*touzi cujin chu*) and for example, the Tumen River Programme had a separate Investment Promotion Programme Office.²⁹⁵ Further, it is reasonable to assume that the departments of Culture and Tourism also participated in the planning of internationally oriented cultural events.

²⁹⁰ Interview 17, Yanbian 2004.

²⁹¹ Interview at Minwei, Yanbian 2004.

²⁹² Unofficial discussions, Yanbian 2005.

²⁹³ Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 2000c.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ However, the activities of these units are not in the focus of this chapter, but the organs particularly aimed to promote the ties with foreign Koreans in support of the foreign trade administration.

The national level *United Front Department of the Communist Party (Tongzhanbu)* has Offices for ethnic and religious affairs (*Minzu zongjiao gongzuoju*), as well as for overseas affairs (*Xiang'aotai haiwai gongzuoju*). The Ethnic and Religious Affairs Office was only entitled foreign liaison activities in respect of Tibetan compatriots (*guowai zangbao*). At the same time, the Office was also responsible to combat domestic and international hostile forces aimed at disintegrating the country.²⁹⁶ The United Front Department also cooperated with foreign benign partners through its Overseas Friendship Associations.

State organs which had a guiding role in the background were the ethnic and overseas affairs committees of the People's Congress (*Renda*) and the People's Political Consultative Congress (*Zhengxie*). *The People's Congress* had an Ethnic Affairs Committee (*Renda minzu weiyuanhui*) and an Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee (*Renda qiaowu weiyuanhui*).²⁹⁷ Its Standing Committee had a separate committee for ethnic, overseas Chinese and foreign affairs (*Minzu qiaowu waishi weiyuanhui*, abbr. *Minqiaowai wei*). These committees assisted in the enacting of laws, which related to ethnic minorities and overseas Chinese.²⁹⁸ However, it should be noted that the Congress is regarded rather as a rubber-stamp organization controlled by the local Party Committee,²⁹⁹ hence, its role has not been central to political decision-making. These Committees were even established in Yanbian, the *Minqiaowai wei* being the most important.³⁰⁰ Further, as Yanbian has been active in the drafting of local regulations on issues such as international labour cooperation, it is highly likely that the *Minqiaowai wei* has played a central role in the preparation of the regulations.

In Yunnan and Xinjiang, the set-up of these committees was somewhat different. The Yunnan People's Congress had a Ethnic Affairs Committee while the Standing Committee of the Congress hosted a Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Working Committee (*waishi huaqiao gongzuo weiyuanhui*).³⁰¹ In Xinjiang, the Standing Committee had a committee for

²⁹⁶ Zhonggong gongyang tongyi zhanxian gongzuo bu 2006. Benbu jieshao, Jigou shezhi.

²⁹⁷ These committees were re-established in 1979.

²⁹⁸ Guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui 2006c.

²⁹⁹ Zhong 2003, 64.

³⁰⁰ Interview 11, Yanbian 2004.

³⁰¹ Yunnansheng renda changweihui yanjiushi 1999.

ethnic, religious, foreign and overseas Chinese affairs (*minzu zongjiao waishi huaqiao weiyuanhui*).³⁰²

The People's Political Consultative Conference (Zhengxie) had two similar committees: the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee (*Minzu zongjiao weiyuanhui*), and the Hong Kong – Macao –Taiwan Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee (*Xiang'aotaiqiao weiyuanhui*).³⁰³ The main functions of the former was described in one of its work reports as "conducting surveys on special issues, arranging forums, research seminars, public lectures, tea parties in which participants give speeches (*chahuahui*), jubilees and activities with friendship associations",³⁰⁴ and presumably the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee had similar responsibilities. The Committee for Overseas Chinese Affairs had a supervision and consultation role, even in Yanbian.³⁰⁵ However, the *Zhengxie* of the Jilin province did not have a separate committee for ethnic and religious affairs, and consequently neither did its sub-committee in Yanbian.³⁰⁶ Nevertheless, even without these Committees, the Yanbian *Zhengxie* still compiled reports and suggestions, which also were related to the ethnic transnational issues.³⁰⁷ Yet, the *Zhengxie* of both Yunnan and Xinjiang had these two committees. The organigram on the structure of the Xinjiang *Zhengxie*, also indicated additional offices for these two committees: one for legal systems related to ethnic and religious issues (*minzhong fazhi weiban*) and another for overseas Chinese issues (*Xiang'aotaiqiao weiban*).³⁰⁸

The regional mosaic of these committees and the regionally varying tasks of the *Qiaoban* and the *Minwei*, display the flexibility of the Chinese administrative system. The arrangement of the state-organs at local level and their functions, were issues which could be negotiated and organized according to the local conditions.

³⁰² I have not found any information about eventual ethnic or overseas Chinese affairs committees under the People's Congress in Xinjiang. Xinjiang Weiwuer zizhizhou renda changweihui bangongding xuanchuanhu 2000.

³⁰³ Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang weiyuanhui quanguo weiyuanhui bangongting 2006.

³⁰⁴ Guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui 2006d.

³⁰⁵ Interview 11, Yanbian 2004.

³⁰⁶ Jilinsheng zhengxie 2006a; Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Yanbian chaoxianzu weiyuanhui 2006.

³⁰⁷ E.g. A document which dealt with the utilization of migrants' remittances. Zhou Zhengxie guanyu jinyibu tuijin quanmin chuanye de jianyan. Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizhou weiyuanhui 2004.

³⁰⁸ Zhengxie Yunnansheng weiyuanhui 2006. Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Xinjiang weiwuer zizhiqu weiyuanhui 2006.

Semi-official and Unofficial Actors

Different kinds of associations and mass organizations have worked to create and deepen transnational ethnic relations. Some of the government or party related semi-official associations in Yanbian, were established during the period when official contacts with South Korea were prohibited. A second wave of the establishment of new associations took place after the normalization of Sino-South Korean ties, when unofficial foreign-oriented associations also were permitted. By the end of the 1990s, there were ten foreign-oriented associations in Yanbian altogether,³⁰⁹ most oriented towards North or South Korea, although some liaised with American or Japanese Korean scholars. In addition, a myriad of hobby and sports clubs, academic associations and cultural institutions organized exchanges with foreign Koreans.

The first foreign-oriented association was established in Yanbian in the 1980s. The Yanbian Overseas Union³¹⁰ (*Yanbian haiwai lianyihui*) was established by the United Front Work Department of the Yanbian Communist Party Committee in 1986.³¹¹ Similar Party-related friendship associations were re-established elsewhere in China in the late 1980s. In Yanbian, the scope of the association's work covered overseas Chinese, foreign Koreans (*guowai chaoxianren*), and other foreign friends.³¹² Although the United Front Work Department did not liaise with foreign Koreans³¹³, the Friendship Union affiliated to it did promote cooperation with them.

A couple of years after the establishment of the Overseas Union, the Yanbian Department of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation set up a Chamber of International Commerce. This occurred around 1990, and was a sub-branch of the national level Chamber of International

³⁰⁹ Jin Yongwan 1999b, 20. Despite various attempts in 2004, I was unable to acquire a list of foreign-oriented associations from the Department of Civil Affairs, which holds a register of all local associations.

³¹⁰ The most common English translation for "Hawai lianyihui" is "Overseas friendship association". I have chosen to use "overseas union" because this translation is given in the brochure of the association in Yanbian.

³¹¹ Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizhouzhi, shang juan 1996, 456.

³¹² Yanbian Chaoxianzu Zizhizhou Haiwai Lianyihui 2004.

³¹³ Interview at the United Front Work Department, Yanbian, 2004.

Commerce. The primary goal of this organ was to build up ties with South Korea in an unofficial manner.³¹⁴ One interviewee described its background, thus:

*"Because it was not convenient to be in direct contact with South Korean business associations, the Department of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation opened this semi-official 'window'. It is called Chamber of International Commerce. The vice chairperson of the Department acted as the head of the Chamber."*³¹⁵

In addition to these two foreign-oriented semi-official organizations in Yanbian, official friendship organizations (*duiwai youhao xiehui*) also existed during the period before 1992.³¹⁶

The International Public Relations Association (IPRA) (*Guoji gonggong guanxi xiehui*) was established at the national level in 1991. In the early 1990s, in order to break up China's international isolation arising from the Tian'anmen massacre in 1989, other internationally oriented associations were also established. However, in Yanbian the main purpose of this organization was to widen and strengthen the ties with South Korea. In 1994, the Association officially established a branch in Yanbian. However, actual work already began in Yanbian in 1993, as the Association sent over 200 people to participate in a technology fair in South Korea.³¹⁷ This Association was also closely linked with the local political elite. For example, the chair of the prefectural People's Political Consultative Conference (*Zhengxie*), Jin Yongwan, had also acted as the chairperson of the association.

In addition to this association, the Association for the Promotion of Korean Culture in Yanbian (*Yanbian Chaoxianzu wenhua fazhan cujin hui*)³¹⁸ and the International Issues Research Association (*Guoji wenti yanjiu hui*) have also been active in paving the way for Yanbian's internationalization. The Research Association has taken into discussion issues

³¹⁴ The Chamber of International Commerce was created in 1988 out of the old China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), which itself was established in May 1952. The Chamber of International Commerce 2006.

³¹⁵ Interview 6, Yanbian 2005.

³¹⁶ Jilinsheng Yanjishi difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 2003, 222.

³¹⁷ Interview with a representative of the Association, Yanbian, 2004.

³¹⁸ Jin Zhongguo 1999b, 11.

related to Yanbian's international economic, political, cultural and ethnic relations. Through its interpersonal ties, this Association is close to the political establishment, too. For example, many of its members were retired cadres.³¹⁹ An active member of the IPRA recounted that although the IPRA and the research association did not have the right to participate in actual political decision-making, they were permitted to participate in the political process through suggestions, and assistance in the formulation of various policies. Indeed, during my fieldwork, I gained the impression that these unofficial but elite-linked associations were able to be engaged in a critical but constructive dialogue with the government, and they were in a position to influence the politics related to international cooperation. At the same time, they could actively promote the expansion of the ties as well as provide substance to the international activities.

In all, the main organs, which promoted foreign Korean ties in Yanbian, were the local governments and their friendship associations, the party-affiliated Overseas Union, and the semi- and unofficial associations which were close to the political establishment. At the provincial level, the *Minwei*, too, was involved to some extent in these activities. In contrast to Yanbian, in Xinjiang and Yunnan the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office was also engaged in the promotion of foreign non-Han ethnic ties.

Organizing Activities for the Promotion of Ties

Since the introduction of reform policies in 1978, local governments have had two fundamental objectives: economic development and the maintenance of social and political stability. In Yanbian, economic development was obstructed for a long time due to a narrow access to international markets. When the Tumen River Development Programme was launched, whose successful implementation became one of the key tenets for the prefectural government, this situation changed.

The maintenance of social and political stability was one of the crucial policy issues included in the annual political contracts of the township and village-level cadres.³²⁰ This target is particularly relevant in border regions inhabited by cross-border ethnic groups since any kind

³¹⁹ Discussion with one of the members of the Association.

³²⁰ Zhong 2003, 130-133.

of social instability in border regions threatens border security. If the harmony is disrupted by ethnic cross-border groups, who may even have a kin-state beyond the border, the situation becomes even graver. Thus, in the administration of border regions inhabited by ethnic minorities the social and political stability aspect gained extra emphasis. Further, with economic development as one of the crucial policy issues, it is also regarded as a most important means to maintain social stability and prevent separatist sentiments from gaining a foothold.³²¹

The organs engaged in the promotion of ties with foreign Koreans worked for these goals. They have attempted to cultivate positive feelings among foreign Koreans for Yanbian, and then institutionalize such emerging ties. Their activities included the arrangement of Korean cultural festivals and exhibitions, institutionalization of formal friendship relations between different localities, plus the “sending out and inviting in” –work (*zouchuqu, qingjinlai*). All these activities were initiated to support local development plans and in some cases, the first step was taken at the national level, in connection with nation-wide campaigns.

“Sending Out and Inviting In”

Before the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in 1992, Yanbian had no official contacts with South Korea. Indeed, relations with North Korea were nurtured, and the official attitude towards South Korea was reserved and suspicious. However, since the mid-1980s, Yanbian's contacts with South Korea and other capitalist countries have been gradually built up through semi- and unofficial channels, leaning on ethnic and family ties, which groundwork later created a basis for business activities.

In the early 1980s, the first contacts with foreign countries were created by associations, individual scholars, artists, and sportsmen. The first person to “break through the restricted zone” (*chongpo "jinqu"*) was a professor of Yanbian University who visited West Germany and Sweden in 1982.³²² The unofficial cultural exchange with South Korea was initiated in

³²¹ Wu Wen 2001, 9.

³²² Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizhouzhi difang bianzuan weiyuanhui 1996a, 500.

1989. In that year, a famous Yanbian Korean poet visited several South Korean universities and the song and dance troupe of Yanbian performed in South Korea.³²³

The Party-affiliated Yanbian Overseas Union was the first association in Yanbian to liaise with Koreans living in capitalist countries, which illustrates the sensitivity of Yanbian's international relations of that time. Only an association affiliated to the Party was allowed to liaise with foreign capitalist Koreans and, even this, in an unofficial manner. In the mid-1980s, the Union invited over members of both the Sino-Canadian Association for the Economic and Cultural Exchange of the Korean People (*Jia-Zhong chaoxianren jingji wenhua jiaoliuhui*) and the Friendship Association of Korean People in China and the United States (*Mei-Zhong chaoxianren youhao xiehui*) and in return, the Union was invited to pay a return visit to Canada and the United States in 1988. During this, the leadership of the Union met with over 200 foreign Koreans, which provided an important foundation for future economic cooperation. The first investments which Yanbian received were mainly from the United States and it is probable that the two Sino-Canadian co-operative companies which were launched in Yanbian in the late 1980s, were also a result of these visits. Yanbian also received several charitable donations from Canada.³²⁴ Notably, members of the Party-affiliated Union also visited South Korea even before the establishment of official Sino-South Korean diplomatic relations.³²⁵

In the late 1980s, Yanbian's main trade partners were North Korea and the Soviet Union. The largest part of the trade was conducted as barter trade. Yanbian had received some investments from South Koreans via Hong Kong, and from Koreans living in other countries. However, the inauguration of the Tumen Programme and the establishment of official relations between China and South Korea in 1992 profoundly altered this situation. Yanbian was transformed into a centre of international cooperation, but the foreign trade administration of Yanbian was ill prepared for international large-scale economic cooperation as the administration lacked experience in normal international business practices. In these circumstances, all the unofficial channels were mobilized to support a feeble administration. The prefecture promoted the policy of "double types of opening" (*shuangzhong kaifang*)

³²³ Jin Zhongguo 1994a, 243-244.

³²⁴ Interview 4, Yanbian 1996; Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizhouzhi difang bianzuan weiyuanhui 1996b, 1347.

³²⁵ Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizhouzhi difang bianzuan weiyuanhui 1996a, 456-457.

where these two "types" represented governmental and unofficial activities. Family visits to South Korea and elsewhere were encouraged with a policy of "three nos" (*san bu*), i.e. no restrictions on the numbers of people travelling, the number of visits, and the duration of the trip.³²⁶

The prefectural government of Yanbian openly began to encourage Yanbian Koreans to visit South Korea and liaise with Koreans living abroad. In addition to the associations, businesspeople, officials and ordinary people, were also encouraged to make contacts with South Koreans and visit the country. An article in the official newspaper *Yanbian Daily* published just after the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea, emphasized the economic potential that close relations could provide for the development of trade.³²⁷ Grassroots networking of this kind was also seen useful to attract investments. The phrase "to establish projects through visiting relatives, attract investments through communication" (*tanqin dai xiangmu, tongxin yin xiangmu*)³²⁸ became a widely used slogan. As it became easier to visit foreign relatives, Yanbian Koreans used the new opportunity so that between 1990 and 1993, over 56,000 travelled abroad to meet their relatives in South Korea, Russia, Japan and other countries.³²⁹ An unpublished report prepared by a government affiliated trade corporation, stressed the desire to use these contacts to the utmost, thus:

*Mobilize the whole society, the people, use all available relations to attract business from South Korea. Develop widely "establish projects through visiting relatives, attract investments through communication" activities. At the same time, use advertisements, television discussions, news conferences, lectures on attracting business from South Korea, and other methods.*³³⁰

³²⁶ Zhichi "liange libukai", diaodong "liange jijixing", buduan tuijin minzu tuanji jinbu shiye xiang qian fazhan. An article written by staff members of the Jilin provincial Minwei and the Jilin provincial Research Center for Economic Development. Huang Shuo 1997b, 115-116.

³²⁷ Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 1992a.

³²⁸ Ji Kaiqi 1994, 9.

³²⁹ Zheng Yushan, 2000.

³³⁰ Ji Kaiqi 1994, 9.

If any Yanbianese managed to act successfully as middlemen and their activities resulted in a business agreement, they were granted a reward calculated as a percentage of the value of the agreement. These instructions were issued at both prefecture and city level.³³¹

Officials, too, were encouraged to mobilize their interpersonal relationships with South Koreans, in order to promote economic cooperation. The same report also stated that the official departments in all fields should use different types of channels to facilitate cooperation and encourage departments to set up offices in South Korea.³³²

In this connection, two days before the normalization of Sino-South Korean ties, the city of Yanji decided to establish a South Korea service department (*Hanguo shiwu fuwujū*), and at the same time, also launched some additional specific measures to support business with the country. One of these objectives was to create harmonious conditions for the expansion of the "family visit projects" (*tanqin dai xiang*). More importantly, however, was the provision of services for prospective South Korean investors and perfect the preferential policies relating to South Korean investments. In this respect, the city compiled Korean language guides for investors and spread information about Yanji by, for example, sending delegations to South Korea. The city also planned to invite some key personnel from the country.³³³

The semi- and unofficial elite associations proved indispensable in this situation. Closely affiliated to the Party and government organs, they were effectively mobilized to expand business contacts and to act as middlemen. For example, the Yanbian Overseas Union played a decisive role in the attraction of five foreign investments, and the International Public Relations Association managed to attract two factories to the area, in both of which, the interpersonal networks of the Associations' leading figures were essential. The vice-president of the Union managed to secure three large investment projects for Yanbian thanks largely to her wide personal networks in South Korea. The total value of these investments was over

³³¹ Ding Rongtai 2001, 150; Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizhou renmin zhengfu dui zhaoshang yinzi zhongjieren jiangli banfa (n.d.). Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 2006; Dui xiangmu zhongjieren jiangli zhengce. Yanbian touzi xinxiwang 2003. For example in 2005, the city of Yanji rewarded nine people with awards worth RMB 6,000 – 100,000. Yanjishi shangwujū 2006.

³³² Ji Kaiqi 1994, 9.

³³³ *Yanbian Ribao* 5 September 1992.

USD 10 million.³³⁴ In addition to attracting investors to Yanbian, the ethnic Korean members of these associations also supported foreign trade officials if business negotiations ran into difficulties. For example, if a deadlock between the officials and investors loomed, the associations could intervene and in some cases were able to persuade the investors to start up businesses in Yanbian.³³⁵ In the 1990s, the role of ethnic Korean middlemen was also crucial as the state-owned companies were staffed mainly by the Han Chinese,³³⁶ who did not possess the suitable cultural and social capital. These successful middlemen were similarly granted awards for their efforts to attract investments and technology to Yanbian.³³⁷

Up to 1998, these two associations alone had invited over 2,000 foreign guests to Yanbian, arranged over 20 symposia and sent several hundreds of people abroad to make on-the-spot investigations, to study the situation and conduct business negotiations.³³⁸ In addition to the clearly foreign-oriented associations, other associations and clubs have also sent people abroad and invited guests to Yanbian, thus showing the worth of the "people's diplomacy".

The role of the associations was also important in addressing politically sensitive issues between Yanbian and foreign counterparts. In this way, they were able to smoothen the economic cooperation. One of the political irritants was the claims of nationalist Koreans that Yanbian should be an integral part of a united Korea. The unofficial associations, which were closely related to the political elite, reacted to these claims by publishing articles which countered such claims. They disseminated these articles in South Korea, and discussed the sensitive issues when meeting with high level officials in South Korea. In this indirect way, the Yanbian government was assured that the South Korean government did not support these claims.³³⁹

The popular unofficial associations which were not close to the government and the Party, lived in a sort of symbiosis with political decision-makers. These associations which organized, for example, cultural or sports events, undertook PR-work for China and Yanbian

³³⁴ Zhang Beiping 1993, 27.

³³⁵ Jin Yongwan 1999b, 20.

³³⁶ Interview 8, Yanbian 1996; Interview 2, Beijing 1996.

³³⁷ Interview 17, Yanbian, 2004.

³³⁸ Jin Yongwan 1999b, 20.

³³⁹ Jin Yongwan 1999a, 47.

at the grassroots level, as a part of their international activities. They disseminated information on the ethnic minority affirmative policies, which Chinese Koreans enjoyed in China, the fast development and internationalization of Yanbian, and the attractive business opportunities available there. In this way, these associations were able to increase the awareness on the conditions in Yanbian among foreign Koreans, as well the economic opportunities and authentic Korean tourist attractions which existed there. Compliance with the guidance and requests of the state, enabled them to pursue their own interests within the international realm.

However, the role of associations and other ethnic Korean middlemen in business promotion, has clearly diminished. For example, the young official whom I met at the Department of Commerce in 2004, had no knowledge of any associations whose role had been important ten years earlier, although he did agree that their role was probably essential in the early 1990s. For example, he believed that the phrase “*xianmin houguan*” (first popular then official) used to describe the role of unofficial activities to prepare the ground for official work held true. Similarly, an official at the Foreign Affairs Office of the prefectural government was completely unaware with the International Public Relations Association. Since the early days of the 1990s, when the foreign trade administration had struggled on in the face of lack of resources, contacts, and experience, the administration had expanded and gained strength. The administration and local companies now had wide and stable international contacts, and more resources, to participate in international cooperation. Further, officials took control of the management of international relations and were no longer dependent on the support of semi- and unofficial channels. This shift took place in the mid-1990s. Subsequently, these associations were mobilized in a variety of campaigns, covering student exchange, labour export and charity work, although business promotion still remained on their agenda. For example, as Yanbian was included in the Western Development Program, the associations were invited to support the Program.³⁴⁰ A comment by an active member of a local association, summed up the development of the associations in a following way:

The overall trend started in the mid-1980s, in 1983, 1985, when unofficial associations were first established. At that time, the state permitted their

³⁴⁰ Interview 23, Yanbian 2004; Yanbian Chaoxianzu Zizhizhou Haiwai Lianyihui 2004.

*establishment. Now, it encourages and furthermore actively guides them; hopes that they can actively cooperate with the state in conducting some public relations work, and carrying out some people's diplomacy for the state.*³⁴¹

Until the late 1990s, foreign Koreans were the main target of state-directed liaison activities, not Yanbian Koreans who resided abroad. At the national level, the focus of overseas Chinese affairs had already become more oriented students and professionals in the early or latest at mid-1990s. A circular issued by the State Council in 1992, urged the former employers of the overseas students and professionals to maintain contacts with them and persuade them to return, after which, several coastal cities and provinces launched initiatives to attract returnees with various generous arrangements for them.³⁴² Although the national campaign to invite foreign students to return was also launched in Yanbian in 1992³⁴³, for a long time Yanbianese students and professionals remained secondary.

In 2001, the provincial government issued preferential policies which were aimed at attracting international students to return to Jilin which were also implemented in Yanbian. International students were regarded as a new source of skills, knowledge and networks. In an article written by two Yanbian University-affiliated party functionaries and one official from the Service Centre for International Studies (*Chuguo liuxue fuwu zhongjin*), returnees were considered as an important asset for local development. The writers proposed a list of preferential practices which would help to attract returnees which included, for example higher salaries and better housing, although, the writers also expressed concern about the abilities of these returnees. In general, only one third of the students and staff who had moved abroad returned, most of which were in the 40s and 50s. The majority of younger students and workers had no plans to return. Moreover, most of the international students were engaged in research in the fields of arts and literature, which were not directly conducive to economic or technological development. In addition to returnees, Yanbianese students and researchers who

³⁴¹ Interview 6, Yanbian 2005.

³⁴² Xiang 2003, 30.

³⁴³ "Qiwang zai wailiu xuesheng renyuan xuecheng huiguo ijangong liye" a new dispatch of the xinhua new agency, *Yanbian Ribao* 21 August 1992. This campaign marked a shift in the central government's attitude towards students who had left China after the Tian'anmen massacre.

had settled abroad, were portrayed in the article as potential sources of new technology, equipment, research methods as well as cooperation partners, too.³⁴⁴

The Arrangement of Korean Cultural Festivals and Exhibitions

One form of official business-promotion activities was the arrangement of international Korean cultural events most of which had a purely business-related character, but some wished to bring the Chinese Korean community to the knowledge of foreign Koreans, and portray them as potentially valuable partners for cooperative endeavours. Important occasions included international trade fairs, and the anniversaries of the autonomous prefecture, which were celebrated grandiosely every fifth year. These celebrations were organized by the prefectural government.

The First Korean Cultural Festival which the Yanbian Prefecture organized in August 1992 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Prefecture, provides a good example of these cultural trade events. The organizers invited ethnic Korean guests from 10 countries and among the foreign guests were also over 500 businesspeople with a Korean background. During the festival, representatives of Yanbian companies held negotiations with the business guests and agreed on participation in over 40 projects. These business activities delighted and surprised the organizers by their success as the number and volume of cooperation agreements and trade deals with foreign companies surpassed all expectations.³⁴⁵ The idea of these festivals was summed up by the slogan “culture and art create the stage - investments and trade are the actors” (*wenyi datai - jingmao changxi*).³⁴⁶

In addition to these festivals with an ethnic Korean character, Yanbian also tried to attract foreign Korean attention by establishing a permanent exhibition on Chinese Korean folk customs and by reconstructing several folk custom villages.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ Liu Rongjie & Jin Hualin & Cui Yongri 2002, 100-102.

³⁴⁵ Jin Zhongguo 1994a, 248; *Yanbian Ribao* 1 September 1992 a and b, 8 September.

³⁴⁶ Jin Zhongguo 1994a, 248.

³⁴⁷ Piao Jinhai 2002, 11; *Jilinsheng qingwang* 2006a.

Cultural activities of this kind found support in the practices of China's minority policy. China has placed emphasis on the cultivation of the minorities' folk customs, such as traditional festivals, the performing arts and attire. These politically less sensitive aspects of ethnic minority cultures were not considered as harmful to the unity of the state - unlike religious practices, and thus, the state has generously supported them. Koreans have managed to maintain their folklore comparatively well and enjoy a high level of education, mainly in the fields of literature, history and the performing arts. This background has provided firm basis for the arrangement of ethnic cultural events and exhibitions.

Yanbian tried to intensify the interest and affection of foreign Koreans toward Yanbian by emphasizing its cultural koreanness but at the same time also aimed to counteract other politically sensitive claims on commonality. For example, officials refuted all pronouncements of Yanbian being a part of Korea historically or in terms of nationhood. Thereby the promotion of transnational Korean ties was a political selective act. These attempts to elevate the koreanness of Yanbian, can be interpreted as a way to reinforce "diffuse solidarity" with the transnational community. This type of solidarity creates an affinity within larger entities such as territorial and symbolic communities in which participants otherwise largely lack interpersonal face-to-face contact.³⁴⁸

Establishment of Institutional Links

In addition to the semi- and unofficial organs, it was natural that government units also began to aim at mobilize ethnic Korean links - once the diplomatic relations with South Korea had been established. The leaders of the Prefecture and lower level units invited South Korean businesspeople to discuss cooperation, and along with occasionally foreign students, politicians and artists celebrate such occasions as the Spring Festival, New Year, and China's National Day. At these kinds of events, important South Korean partners were granted honorary citizenships and other honorary titles.³⁴⁹

Local governments were also active in establishing friendship relations with cities, prefectures and counties elsewhere in the world, as an example Yanji, the capital of Yanbian, established

³⁴⁸ Faist 2000, 106, 109

³⁴⁹ Interview 17, Yanbian, 2004.

the People's Friendship Association (*Renmin duiwai youhao xiehui*) in 1988 to support the "open door" policies. The chronicle of the Yanji City stated that up to the year 1999, Yanji had created friendly relations (*youhao wanglai guanxi*) with 11 cities and districts in five different countries, of which five were in South Korea. In addition, Yanji had friendship cities in each of Australia and Russia.³⁵⁰

To create and establish these relations, interpersonal relations and the intermediary role of associations were sometimes crucial, as when for example, the Association of Public International Relations played an important role in the establishment of friendly relations between the Yanbian Prefecture and the South Korean prefecture Gwangju.³⁵¹

Compared with the general patterns of established overseas Chinese work in China's coastal provinces, those activities directed at the promotion of transnational Korean ties in Yanbian were overall rather similar. These organs were engaged in "sending out and inviting in" activities to create and maintain ties with both famous and ordinary foreign ethnic Koreans who potentially could contribute to Yanbian's development. One major difference is in the lack of more organized hometown activities. Generally, coastal overseas Chinese regions undertook liaison work with Chinese hometown associations established in foreign countries,³⁵² but this aspect was lacking in the ethnic Korean work as the ethnic Korean community which Yanbian mobilized did not have its original roots in Yanbian. Although Yanbian attempted to play upon a "secondary affiliation" with the area, this dimension was not as pronounced as in the overseas Chinese work of coastal regions. One more difference can be discerned in the content of the activities. The hometown activities in coastal regions had a distinct local flavour, while the Yanbian arrangers seemed to rather emphasise a more general commonality, the Korean culture.

³⁵⁰ Jilinsheng Yanjishi difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 2003, 222; Jilinsheng waishi qiaowu xiang'ao bangongshi 2005.

³⁵¹ Jin Yongwan 1999b, 21.

³⁵² Cheng & Ngok 1999, 113-142.

Capital Transfers

Economic transfers

The first joint venture in Yanbian was established in 1986 between an American subsidiary of a South Korean company and the prefecture of Yanbian. Before the establishment of Sino-South Korean official relations, most of the foreign investments came from American Koreans, or American affiliates to South Korean companies.³⁵³ Until the end of 1992, altogether 131 of the 212 wholly or partly foreign-owned companies in Yanbian, *sanziqiye*, were financed by ethnic Korean capital. The greatest number, consisting of 72 companies, had absorbed South Korean capital and 10 North Korean capital. In all, 49 companies were partly or wholly financed by ethnic Koreans from other countries such as the United States, Japan and Canada.³⁵⁴ In these 49 cases at least, it is reasonable to suppose that ethnic and family ties played an important role in the investment decisions. In 1996, an official in the foreign trade administration recounted to me, that foreign investors from other countries than South and North Korea were still mainly ethnic Koreans.

The year 1996 can be seen as a turning point in Yanbian's foreign economic cooperation. The number of enterprises receiving South Korean investment rose to 393. Significantly, many of these new projects included large-scale foreign investments. Between 1996 and 1997, the total volume of actually used foreign investments more than doubled.³⁵⁵ The financial crisis, which hit the South Korean economy severely, brought about a crash in South Korean foreign direct investments. Although South Korea recovered quickly from the crisis, the number and value of received FDI did not reach to previous levels in 1996 and 1997. However, by 2002 the accumulated number of South Korean direct investments had risen to 515, which comprised 74 per cent of all FDI in Yanbian. Nevertheless, their average value was rather small, at USD 790,000 compared with the average value of FDI from Hong Kong (USD 2.7 million), Taiwan (USD 1.02 million) and Japan (USD 1.01 million).³⁵⁶ On the basis of the development plans, it is difficult to estimate whether these investments satisfied the local trade

³⁵³ Interview 4, Yanbian 1996.

³⁵⁴ Jin Zhongguo 1994b, 38.

³⁵⁵ UNIDO 1998, 5-7.

³⁵⁶ Li Zhonglin & Shen Wangen & Lin Jinshu 2003, 83.

administration. For the most, the annual work plans of the prefectural government did not specify targets for the new FDI. Yet, a report compiled by a leading cadre of the Tumen Programme Office, revealed dissatisfaction with the type of investments Yanbian had received. Although the number of investments was relatively high when compared with other places in Jilin province, the level of technology, scale, efficiency and compatibility was low. The companies involved had made huge losses and were unable to invigorate the local economy.³⁵⁷

Further, when compared with other parts of China, South Korean interest in Yanbian was limited. Focussing specifically on the locations of South Korean investment in China, Shanghai, Tianjin and the coastal provinces Shandong, Liaoning, Jiangsu and Zhejiang ranked highest.³⁵⁸ Clearly, investment decisions were guided by profitability, and not by emotion.

Table 4. Foreign Direct Investments in Yanbian 2002

Source of investment	Accumulated number of companies with FDI	Value of foreign investments (million USD)
South Korea	515	406
Japan	50	51
Hong Kong	49	134
Taiwan	22	23
USA	21	5.6
North Korea	14	2.6
Canada	5	1.3
Malaysia	4	0.5
Australia	4	0.4
Thailand	1	30
Others	4	4.8

Source: Li Zhonglin & Shen Wangen & Lin Jinshu, ed.(2003). *Yanbian waixiangxing jingjilun*. Yanji: Yanbian daxue chubanshe, 83.

Moreover, it seemed to be rather easy to entice Yanbian Koreans to move to coastal China to work in South Korean companies there. By comparison, the South Korean interest in Yanbian

³⁵⁷ Sun Xingbiao 2001, 274.

³⁵⁸ Shangwubu guoji maoyi jingji hezuo yanjiuyuan 2003.

was rather meagre, mainly due to the underdeveloped infrastructure of Yanbian, compared with China's coastal regions.

Foreign invested companies were also a significant employer in Yanbian, helping to reduce unemployment. In the early 21st century, the number of workers employed by companies which had absorbed South Korea investments was comparable with the number of regular Yanbianese labour migrants working abroad.³⁵⁹

While the amount of FDI in Yanbian gradually rose in the early 1990s, foreign trade failed to do the same. Indeed, between the years 1993 and 1996 Yanbian's foreign trade experienced a downward trend. In the early 1990s Yanbian's main trade partner had been North Korea, but due to economic difficulties there, trade slumped drastically in 1993. This crash was exacerbated by the establishment of Sino-South Korean official relations, to which North Korea protested by decreasing trade. Further, the narrow selection and poor quality of Yanbian's main export products in the early 1990s - cereals, coal, tobacco, sugar – were also likely a hindrance to the development of trade with emerging new trade partners, Japan and South Korea. In 1995, Yanbian's foreign trade dropped to USD 155 million from its peak value of USD 467 million in 1993.

In addition to cereals, Yanbian launched new key export products for South Korean markets: textiles, raw materials for textiles, timber and wooden products, which also highlighted the involvement of South Korean companies in Yanbian. One third of South Korean financed companies invested in textile manufacturing. In this connection, Yanbian imported timber from Russia and North Korea in order to manufacture wooden products for South Korean markets.

³⁵⁹ Yanbian tongjiju 2002; Shen Wangen 2002b, 1.

Figure 3. Yanbian's Foreign Trade with Major Trade Partners, 1992-2004.



Figures for Japan 2001-2002 were not available. The trade figures appear inconsistent with each other in the sources. Here, I have relied mainly on Li Zhonglin et al. for the years 1991-2002, and statistics available on the homepage of the Department of Commerce for the years 2003-2005.

Source: Li Zhonglin & Shen Wangen & Lin Jinshu (2003). *Yanbian waixiangxing jingji lun*. Yanji: Yanbian daxue chubanshe, 211, 229, 254; Yanbian touzi xinxiwang: 2003 nian 1-12 yue quanzhou duiwai maoyi guojia yilanbiao; 2004 nian 1-12 yue quanzhou duiwai maoyi guojia yilanbiao; 2005 nian 1-12 yuefen quanzhou zhuyao maoyi huoban yilanbiao. <http://invest.yanbian.gov.cn/link/tongji/ziliao,jinchukou/tongji>; Piao Chengxian main ed. (2002) *Tumenjiang diqu guoji hezuo kaifa xiankuang yu fazhan yanjiu baogao*. Yanji: Yanbian daxue, 258.

In 2004, South Korea accounted for 20 per cent and North Korea 38 per cent of Yanbian's foreign trade, this latter presumably arising from the economic reforms initiated in North Korea in 2002. Furthermore, the visit by China's leader Jiang Zemin to North Korea the same year probably intensified the trade relations between the countries. This leapfrog of trade with North Korea meant that its actual value of trade greatly surpassed the planned annual targets, while the trade and the targets otherwise had correlated quite closely (see Figure 4, page 128). At the same time, Yanbian's border trade recovered from a recession. In 2002, the value of the border trade was USD 120 million. However, this was only half of its value ten years

earlier.³⁶⁰ When compared with other regions in China, Yanbian's trade with neighbouring countries appears small. For example, the border city of Dandong in the Liaoning Province handles a larger share of China's trade with North Korea.³⁶¹

Figure 4. Annual Targets and Actual Value of Foreign Trade, 1995-2005.

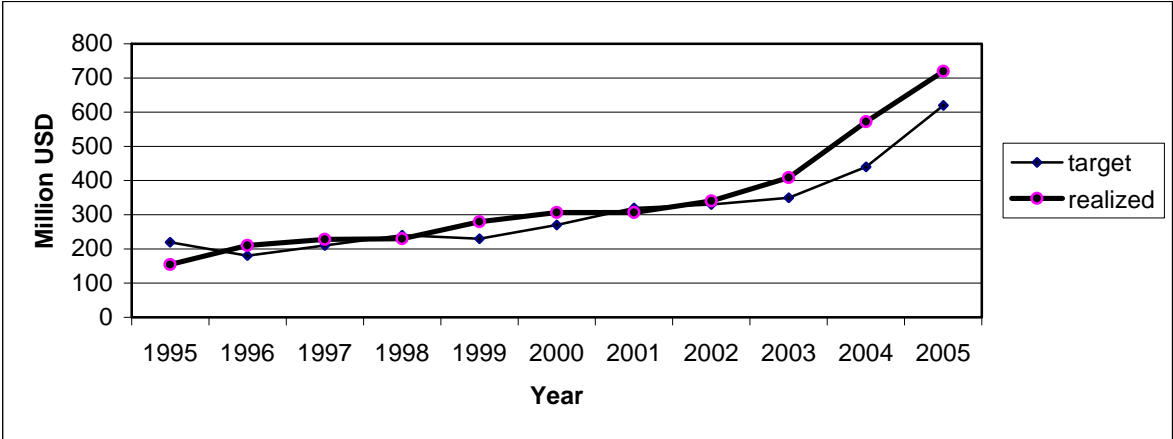


Table commences in 1995 when targets were given in USD, prior to this, Chinese RMB was used.

Source: *Yanbian touzi xinxiwang* (2006c). 2005 nian 1-12 yuefen quanzhou zhuyao maoyi huoban yilanbiao; Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu. Zhengfu gongzuo baogao, various years.

In reality, Yanbian's trade with North and South Korea and Russia was much higher, since for example, many of the companies involved in foreign trade with North Korea were not registered.³⁶² Thus, this trade remains missing from the statistics. Similarly, the vibrant shuttle-trade with the bordering countries, South Korea included, is not reflected in the statistics.

Although Korean investments in Yanbian are relatively few, and registered trade with the two Koreas low, the role of foreign Korean links in the development of the Yanbian economy has still been crucial. China's central government has provided Yanbian with several preferential

³⁶⁰ Piao Chengxian 2003, 60; Yanbian tongjiju 2003; Li Zhonglin et al 2003, 232, 234.

³⁶¹ *The New York Times* 27.10.2006.

³⁶² Li Zhonglin et al 2003, 221.

polices³⁶³, but only limited funds has been given to create a solid economic basis. The South Korean funds have compensated for the lack of domestic investments. Thus, although supported by preferential policies, the development of Yanbian has been largely financed by South Korea. Today, as the economic structure has become consolidated, domestic companies are also showing a growing interest in Yanbian. This development has been supported by a state-sponsored campaign to rejuvenate the economy of Northeast China.³⁶⁴ Besides, these official trade activities, unofficial trade with South and North Korea and Russia, which is based of common ethnic background or family ties, provides an important source of income for ordinary Yanbian Koreans.

Overseas Chinese investments in coastal China provide an interesting case for comparison. Despite the magnitude of the investments, the majority of overseas Chinese investors were small or medium-size companies.³⁶⁵ Compared with Japanese or Western investors, overseas Chinese companies invested generally less. In addition, their level of technology was often lower than that in companies from other countries. For example, Guangdong wanted to receive higher technology but did not acquire it. Instead, the first overseas Chinese investors provided the province with less advanced technology.³⁶⁶ However, this turned out to be a blessing in disguise for the area, as the lower technical level was actually more appropriate for the local conditions: i.e. an underdeveloped infrastructure combined with a cheap labour force.³⁶⁷ In this environment, low-level technology was more easily transferred.

The exceptional significance of the Chinese diaspora investments can be partly explained by the orientation of the overseas Chinese community. This can be illuminated by comparison between the Indian and Chinese diaspora made by Balasubramanyam and Mahambare. Indians that reside in Europe and the US are less engaged in business, and more in professions such as education, science or engineering. Further, they are more inclined to put their earnings into bank deposits than in investments. The exception here is the emerging export oriented software industry. The Chinese diaspora, in contrast, is more business-oriented, so that as

³⁶³ These policies include preferential policies for ethnic minority regions, the Tumen River Development, the Development of the West and the Development of the Old Industrial Basis of the Northeast.

³⁶⁴ Interview 12, Yanbian 2004.

³⁶⁵ Bolt 2000, 87.

³⁶⁶ Vogel 1989, 181.

³⁶⁷ Bolt 2000, 88.

China initiated its reform policies, the overseas Chinese business community immediately took advantage of the low labour and land costs provided by China. The conclusion of this comparative study was that the background and orientation of the Indian diaspora was one important reason for the relatively low volume of FDI in India, as compared with China.³⁶⁸

Researchers agree on the significance of overseas Chinese investments for southern China during the initial stage of the reforms. In addition to monetary investments, they also channelled new technology and managerial skills. Moreover, they helped bureaucrats to understand the needs of entrepreneurs, thus improving the business environment.³⁶⁹ Overseas Chinese investments also generated additional foreign investments. After overseas Chinese investors were successful in China, then Japanese and Western companies also became confident that investment in China could be worthwhile, and their example contributed positively to a further increase in FDI in China.³⁷⁰

The patterns of ethnic Korean investments in Yanbian show similarities. The investments were small and did not include high technology. They were concentrated in the service sector. Cooperation with South Korean companies provided an important learning process for the inexperienced Yanbian Korean companies, which helped them to adapt to international cooperation. In southern China, overseas Chinese investments paved way for other foreign investors. In Yanbian, Korean investments created conditions which facilitated the flow of both foreign and domestic Chinese investments into the area. In this way, the foreign investments in fact supported Yanbian's integration into China's domestic economy.³⁷¹

Compared with the overseas Chinese community, the Korean transnational community has been less inclined to invest in South Korea, largely as a result of South Korea's restrictive policy against foreign direct investment. South Korea only made the first attempts to mobilize

³⁶⁸ Balasubramanyam & Mahambare 2003, 10-11

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

³⁷⁰ Bolt 2000, 84; Gao 2000

³⁷¹ Yanbian's neighbour North Korea, also provides an interesting case for comparison. North Korea made massive purchases of Western machinery in 1972-1974. Yet, in many cases, North Korea did not possess the planning capacities, building technology or managerial skills required to build and run these factories. In addition, the work practices were not adaptable to the construction and operating demands of plants using Western technology. Therefore, many plants did not start operations or they made only marginal contributions. Buzo 1999, 89.

its Korean diaspora for economic purposes in 1997 when the Overseas Koreans Foundation was established. Since 2002, the Foundation has convened annual “World Korean Business Conventions” whose aim is to build a global Korean business network in support of the South Korean economy. As South Korea has simultaneously liberalized foreign investment rules, so has the amount of ethnic Korean investment begun to increase.³⁷² Indeed, supported by the tradition of overseas Chinese work, Yanbian was ahead of South Korea in its organized attempts to mobilize the transnational ethnic Korean community.

Donations and Family Remittances

Attracting donations and remittances is a central part of the traditional overseas Chinese work. However, in Yanbian, foreign Korean donations were few and their administration was not centralized. The Department of Commerce and the different associations did administer donations, but in practice, donors could also directly contact beneficiaries. Further, there appeared not to be any lists of recommended targets for the donations, but rather, the donors themselves could decide where to put their money. The main reasons for making donations were family and kinship ties as well as other personal links to the region.³⁷³

With high respect for education among Koreans, many of the donations were directed to schools, institutes and universities, e.g. some foreign Koreans who had lived in Yanbian in their childhood, gave donations to their *alma mater*. These donations could include technical equipment, books, periodicals or grants. One former student of a well known local school established a foundation, which gave scholarships to middle-school students. The former chairman of the South Korean Daewoo business conglomerate also secretly visited Yanbian in 1985, and during his visit, made a substantial book donation to Yanbian University.³⁷⁴ During my fieldworktrip to Yanbian in 2004, I met with a South Korean businessman who had recently made a donation to a technical institute in Yanbian. Although he had no business in Yanbian, but in other parts of China, he still chose Yanbian as the target of his donation, because his father and mother had been born there.

³⁷² *The Korea Times* 21 November 2002; Choi 2003, 22-23.

³⁷³ Discussion with a donor, Yanbian, 2004; Interviews 8 and 12, Yanbian, 2004.

³⁷⁴ Lee 1986, 149.

During the 1990s, through the channels of the "people's diplomacy", Yanbian had received donations worth USD 10 million.³⁷⁵ However, high taxes imposed on donations as well as corruption were cited as the main reasons for the scarcity of donations. People were willing to donate, but as only small proportion of the sum would reach the destination, potential donors have withdrawn.³⁷⁶

Family remittances from Korean foreign relatives were scarce in Yanbian. Instead of sending money, many South Korean relatives preferred to give generous gifts when they met with their Yanbian relatives. In contrast, significant flows of Korean monetary capital ran toward North Korea. Firstly, the Yanbian Koreans supported their relatives and friends in North Korea financially and by providing them with clothes and food. My informants in Yanbian emphasized that the majority of Korean financial and material support did not flow from South Koreans to Yanbian Koreans, but from Yanbian Koreans to North Koreans. Secondly, Yanbian served as a channel for South Korean remittances, which were directed to North Korea. Both South Koreans and North Koreans who lived outside their home country used Yanbian Korean brokers to deliver money to their relatives in North Korea.³⁷⁷

Nevertheless, the remittances sent by Yanbian Korean labour migrants from abroad to Yanbian were significant. In 2003, the migrant remittances were said to reach USD 653 million.³⁷⁸ These remittances will be covered in detail further, in the next chapter.

Human and Social Capital Transfers

Investors can contribute to development not only through monetary investments, but also in the provision of human and social capital. Such new resources do not necessarily stay within the confines of the original investment, but in an ideal case, also "spill over", and enhance other local companies in the region and generate additional economic activities. When foreign firms enter the local market, they often introduce new technologies, provide technical assistance to their local suppliers and customers and train workers and managers who may

³⁷⁵ Jin Yongwan 1999b, 21.

³⁷⁶ Interview 12, Yanbian, 2004; Personal correspondence, Great Britain 1996.

³⁷⁷ *The New York Times* 19 October 2006.

³⁷⁸ This sum probably indicates the foreign remittances received by local banks. Unofficial discussions in 2004 and 2005; *Xinhua* *Jilin pindao* 29 June 2004.

then later be employed by local firms, or set up own businesses. In this way, FDI will then also improve the technology and productivity of local firms. Competition created by foreign enterprises may also compel the local companies to operate more efficiently and introduce new technologies earlier that would otherwise have been the case.³⁷⁹

In Yanbian, such "spill overs" were perceived as an important outgrowth of FDIs. Local researchers stated that the South Korean investments had transferred new technology to the area and helped the locals to learn new managerial skills. Further, since foreign-invested companies were mainly involved in labour-intensive fields, they also employed a substantial number of peasants. For example, around 2002 some 18,000 people worked in South Korean companies in Yanbian, most of whom were previously local peasants. In this way, these companies had an important role in improving the skills of peasant workers.³⁸⁰ Those foreign companies which invested in Yanbian also provided a channel for trainee arrangements and employment opportunities in the home country of the company.³⁸¹ They presumably also have accumulated the social networks of the local trade officials and business managers, which in turn helped them to find new investment or trade opportunities, too.

The activities of different types of associations and other actors of the "people's diplomacy" have supported the human and social capital transfers through participation in seminars, investigation trips and training, and by invitations of, for example teachers, experts and businesspeople to Yanbian.

"Overseas Chinese Work with Korean Characteristics" in the Service of Local Economic Development

The koreanness of Yanbian and Korean ethnic and interpersonal ties, have clearly given some impetus to Korean investors to set up businesses in Yanbian. Firstly, ethnic affinity alone has prompted some investors to choose Yanbian as an investment target. One South Korean businessman, who ran a health centre in Yanji, recounted to me that he had decided to set up a business in Yanbian because the local Koreans and he were of the same people. Some South

³⁷⁹ Kokko 1994, 279.

³⁸⁰ Lü Bishun and Li Zheyu 2002, 130-131.

³⁸¹ Interview 4, Yanbian 2005.

Korean researchers, who have investigated the Sino-South Korean trade, have identified the Korean population of Yanbian as an advantageous element for South Korean investors. For example, the South Korean economist, Si Joong Kim, assumes that cultural proximity has attracted South Korean small and medium-sized firms to China's Korean areas, which otherwise, he speculates, would have been uncertain about investing abroad.³⁸² Further, interpersonal ties and other links have also been a force to promote trade, investments and donations, as the previously mentioned Associations illustrate.

Yanbian has attracted Korean interest also as means for a bridge to North Korea. Since it is relatively easy for Yanbian Koreans to enter North Korea, information from and about North Korea is more readily available there. Local companies can also act as middlemen with North Korean companies. Thus, some investors see Yanbian as a springboard for future investments in North Korea.³⁸³

Korean networks were expected to provide similar resources as the overseas Chinese networks had done; however, neither Yanbian Koreans and Yanbian, nor the foreign Korean community were business-orientated. China's coastal region possesses a long tradition of entrepreneurship, and the overseas Chinese community is highly business-oriented, both aspects of which have contributed to the economic miracle of China's southern coast. However, Yanbian was previously predominantly agrarian and due to its remote and strategic position beside North Korea, its economy had remained less developed. In addition, compared with the overseas Chinese community, the Korean transnational community has been less inclined to invest in its ancestral home regions.

Researchers agree that common ethnic background, language and culture are important factors behind investment decisions, but there is less consensus on how important they are, since other factors than common background also have been crucial. Cheap labour force,

³⁸² See, e.g. Jang Won Suh (1994). South-Korea -China Economic Relations: Trends and Prospects, *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* 4, 26; Si Joong Kim (1994). Korean Direct Investment in China: Perspectives of Korean Investors. In Sumner J. La Croix & Michael Plummer & Keun Lee eds *Emerging Patterns of East Asian Investment in China: From Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 205.

³⁸³ Kim 2003, 101, 118, 119; Snyder 1997.

favourable investment conditions, and rapid economic growth have also provided clear incentives for foreign investors.³⁸⁴

Earlier studies in international business have shown that, where reliance on institutions and laws is less viable, and particularly, when stark differences across national and social boundaries exist, cultural commonalities are important. Cultural factors provide a safety net when a promising investment site is found. Alan Smart has significantly pinpointed, that cultural factors do not determine the outcome, but rather provide a common ground that allows people to cooperate, despite structural constraints.³⁸⁵

Although the common assumption is that profits guide the decision-making, and not cultural or ethnic solidarity, there is evidence that ethnic sympathies still override business calculations, for example, a survey conducted by the Korea Development Institute, showed that the motives of South Korean companies for conducting trade with North Korea were more nationalistic and humanitarian than profit-seeking. In fact, half of the publicly declared company motivations for conducting business with North Korea were unrelated to profit generation.³⁸⁶ Thus, the symbolic ties based on a same nationality and culture, can create basic determinants for business initiatives.

Constraints of Ethnic and Family Ties

A closer look at the elements of koreannes, which Yanbian wished to rely on, reflects the complexity of ethnic ties as a resource to promote economic cooperation, as the same ethnic background or family ties, do not necessarily generate business.

In general, the same ethnic background did not guarantee a privileged position in the eyes of the South Korean community. Indeed, as Yanbian Koreans gained the opportunity to visit South Korea *en masse*, they were surprised at the lack of a warmer reception. South Koreans tended to look down on them, and Yanbian Koreans qualified only as a second-class

³⁸⁴ Huang 2000,193.

³⁸⁵ Smart 1999, 177, 178.

³⁸⁶ Tait 2003, 312-313.

population.³⁸⁷ For political and cultural reasons, North Koreans were held in even less esteem in South Korea. Since with a similar appearance and dialect, Chinese Koreans were often mistaken for North Koreans when visiting South Korea, and thereby often met with rather harsh treatment.³⁸⁸ The arrogant attitude of the South Koreans towards Chinese Koreans was clearly visible.³⁸⁹ One South Korean informant told me that he had been able to create close contacts with Yanbian Koreans because he did not look down on them as other South Koreans did.

As contacts between Chinese Koreans and South Koreans increased, the actual differences in their habits and values became marked. Both groups had drifted apart during the forty years of separation, culturally and in their values in general. These unexpected differences led to conflicts over values and other misunderstandings between the two.³⁹⁰ According to a South Korean sociologist Hyun Ok Park, Chinese Koreans changed from being "long-lost relatives of blood-kin" to a cheap labour force which faced discrimination, arrests, crack-downs and deportations.³⁹¹

Nor did family networks provide an inroad into business, as the majority of Yanbian Koreans had their relatives in North Korea. Again, the close, nurtured ties between Yanbian Koreans and North Korea, still constituted a hindrance to trade with South Korea in the mid-1990s. According to one Yanbian Korean informant, those who wished to maintain their trade relations with North Korean companies were often unable to seek business partners in South Korea, as otherwise, the North Korean side would have broken off the relationship. Although trade with North Korea had become increasingly less profitable in the mid-1990s, many Yanbian Korean businesspeople avoided business contacts with South Korea in order to maintain their brotherly partnership with North Korean companies. Some Yanbian Koreans were also concerned that cooperation with South Korea would place their relatives in North Korea in a difficult situation.³⁹²

³⁸⁷ Wang Tiezhi & Li Hongjie 1997, 24-25; Cui Xuanzhe 1995, 19.

³⁸⁸ Unofficial discussions, Yanbian 1996.

³⁸⁹ The South Korean sociologist Hyun Ok Park described a hierarchy in the Korean diaspora in his article from 1996. Poor Chinese Koreans were socially and legally discriminated against while the American Koreans for example received judicial privileges. Park 1996.

³⁹⁰ Wang Tiezhi & Li Hongjie 1997, 24; Interview 1, Beijing 1999.

³⁹¹ Park 1996.

³⁹² Jin Zhongguo 1994a, 251.

Local officials showed reserve about foreign economic cooperation. For example, one official noted that donations were welcomed only if they were not harmful to the state,³⁹³ the reason for which was probably a fear of foreign infiltration that donations could involve. One definite example is provided by the Technical University of Yanbian, which was created through a donation from a foreign Korean. In addition to the facilities, the donation also covered funds to employ some South Korean staff. Some of the teachers were active in a Christian religious sect called Durihana and they engaged in active missionary work among the students. By 2004, some 300 students of the university had become followers of this sect. In addition to missionary work, the Durihana Foundation also helped North Korean orphans in China and assisted North Korean refugees to reach South Korea.³⁹⁴ This issue evoked great concern among the local leadership as to the political impact of the strong South Korean economic presence in Yanbian.³⁹⁵

Some government officials preferred to avoid the problems which contact with South Koreans might create. This seemed to be a particular hindrance for the ethnic Korean cadres.³⁹⁶ The common fear was that pan-nationalistic South Koreans could infiltrate Yanbian under the guise of economic cooperation.³⁹⁷ Foreigners from other capitalist countries were regarded as potential infiltrators. Westerners were also accused of dividing China peacefully, by spreading Western values as a means to undermine socialism in China, and ultimately, to subvert the system. The fall of socialism in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of Soviet Union loomed large in the background for this fear.³⁹⁸ Some officials, who wished to secure their career by avoiding all trouble, also avoided engagement or cooperation with South Koreans or other foreigners, and it seems that some cadres also did not trust their subordinates and forbade their foreign liaison activities.³⁹⁹ In the 1980s, this kind of suspicion was also commonplace in the coastal regions.

³⁹³ Interview 11, Yanbian, 2004.

³⁹⁴ Durihana Mission 2004.

³⁹⁵ Interview 21, Yanbian, 2004.

³⁹⁶ Jin Yongwan 1999a, 48.

³⁹⁷ Zhichi "liange libukai", diaodong "liange jijixing", buduan tuijin minzu tuanji jinbu shiye xiang qian fazhan. An article written by staff members of the Jilin provincial Minwei and the Jilin provincial Research Center for Economic Development. Huang Shuo 1997b, 114.

³⁹⁸ Yahuda 1995, 156; Wu Wen 2001, 9.

³⁹⁹ Jin Yongwan 1999a, 48.

An article published in the journal of the Party school in 1999 attempted to change this attitude. The writer, Jin Yongwan, himself a member of the political elite, emphasized that "most of the foreigners are good or, at least, fairly good". The overall message of the article was that the cadres should promote the opening up of Yanbian and to dare to create new channels for foreign cooperation, and the development of Yanbian's economy should be placed in focus. The writer admitted that while this work evolves in a complicated environment, mistakes may take place, but that the Party has to believe that the cadres can manage the problems that arise and hold back the influence of foreign political infiltrators. In order to reinforce their ability to stay alert, the writer suggested education in patriotism, ethnic unity and rules of foreign affairs. Through education, the cadres could also be able to distinguish between the relations of countries and ethnic groups, and between socialist and capitalist ethnic identity. His core message was that a similar ethnic background should not be equated with the same citizenship.⁴⁰⁰

In addition to the Government and Party units, associations were also under watch. Jin Yongwan, who had also acted as the chair of the International Public Relations Association, stressed the need to increase party guidance over foreign-oriented associations. The activities of the associations which pursued "people's diplomacy" with foreign Koreans, were strongly political in their nature. For this reason, he stated that the strengthening of party guidance would be an essential guarantee for proper "people's diplomacy" work, and urged close cooperation between associations and the Party. In his opinion, the associations should take the initiative to ask for guidance from the Party and if problems arose, reinforce the guiding role of the Party in their associations. One solution to correct their practices would again be education in ideology and regulations. Education would help the associations "*to understand the circumstances and responsibilities, to follow the laws and regulations of foreign policies and foreign affairs, to uphold social stability, and to strengthen friendship work with foreign countries*". He even recommended that party cells should be in associations, in order to ensure that they follow the Party line.⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Jin Yongwan 1999a, 49.

Similar views were expressed in articles written by researchers sponsored by the national level *Minwei*.⁴⁰² This reflects that this issue was not only a local concern, but received attention at the central government, too. The starting point in these articles was that the Korean masses should be trusted. Chinese Koreans were generally regarded as a patriotic nationality. Their participation in the civil war side on the side of the communists, and then later in the Korean War in the ranks of the Chinese People's Liberation Army demonstrated strong evidence for the accountability of the Chinese Koreans. Thus, the problems arising from the intensive interaction with co-ethnics in South Korea may have come as a surprise, and questions were raised as to whether or not to let the interactions develop further. The traditional trustworthy relationship between the central government and Yanbian, which had allowed the expansion of ties with South Korea, was at stake.

The articles advised that leaders should have faith in the Koreans and trust that their political consciousness was strong enough to hold against the influence of foreign infiltrators. Another point was that international economic cooperation is a necessity for Yanbian, and for this reason, links with foreigners had to be developed. However, questions of social stability, national unity and border security were also raised as priorities of equal importance.⁴⁰³

The writer to one of these reports stated that:

"... while the [Chinese] Koreans interact with foreign Koreans, they have to deal correctly with the question of relations between states, and relations between co-ethnics, place first the safeguarding of the unity of the homeland, and the honour of the country. Under these preconditions, using ethnic, family and home place affection as a link, promote friendship, strengthen networks, promote exchanges and cooperation in the fields of economy, technology and culture".⁴⁰⁴

The main threat was seen in foreign infiltrators whose purpose was to divide China. In Yanbian, the most severe challenge was the pan-Korean activists, who attempted to spread

⁴⁰² Yanbianzhou *Minwei* 1997; Wang Tiezhi & Li Hongjie 1997.

⁴⁰³ Yanbianzhou *Minwei* 1997, 16; Wang Tiezhi & Li Hongjie 1997, 27-28.

⁴⁰⁴ Yanbianzhou *Minwei* 1997, 16.

their views. The articles written by the *Minwei*-sponsored researchers recommended education in correct ethnic and national identity thinking for the Korean masses, and particularly for those who worked in units which dealt with foreigners, such as civil servants or businesspeople. Further, it was stated as important to reinforce the dissemination of correct ideas about the fatherland to counteract any false statements on the historical unity of all Koreans.⁴⁰⁵ At the same time, Chinese Korean researchers were mobilized in a campaign which highlighted the cultural differences between Koreans in China and other countries to define a specific Korean culture, but with Chinese characteristics (*Zhongguo tese chaoxianzu wenhua*). This research project was backed by the provincial Party committee and received funding from the *Minwei*. This project materialized, for example, in articles, books and a seminar arranged in Yanji in 1999.⁴⁰⁶

An article written by a staff member of Yanbian *Minwei*, also reflected the concern, where such strong condemnation of Yanbian Koreans could eventually result in. He remarked that the labelling of Yanbian as a sensitive area (*mingan diqu*) only revealed to local Koreans that they were untrustworthy, and warned that this could create opposition and disappointment which push the Koreans towards the side of the infiltrators.⁴⁰⁷ Thus, there was a clear need to find an appropriate balance between flexibility but still adequate control so as to not obstruct the advantageous capital transfers to Yanbian.

At the same time as these concerns on the loyalty of Yanbian Koreans arose, the exclusionist tendencies of South Korean society produced a counter-force in favour of China. This ambiguous aspect is dealt with in more detail in the following chapter, but for brief reference here. Many Yanbian Koreans became disillusioned from the discrimination they faced in South Korea which served to reinforce their bonds with China. Thus, the situation in which the loyalty of Yanbian Koreans was challenged also raised contradictory tendencies, and accordingly, led to difficulty to draw the correct conclusions and define appropriate policies.

⁴⁰⁵ Yanbianzhou *Minwei* 1997, 16; Wang Tiezhi & Li Hongjie 1997, 27-28.

⁴⁰⁶ Chun Lei (1999) Kaichuang Zhongguo tese chaoxianzu wenhua jianshe de xin jumian – Jilinsheng Zhongguo tese chaoxianzu wenhua yantaohui zongshu. *Beifang minzu* 2, 128-130; Che Zhejiu (1999). Zhongguo tese chaoxianzu wenhua de tedian, *YBDXXB* 32:4, 99-102; Xu Huixun (1999). Zhongguo chaoxianzu yu hanguren xiguan zhi xiangyixing, *YBDXXB* 32:4, 103-106; Zhu Zaixian & Che Jinshun (2000). Zhongguo tese chaoxianzu wenhua de fazhan guilü jiqi qushi, *YBDXXB* 33:4, 25-27; Jin Zhongguo et al eds (2001). *Zhongguo tese chaoxianzu wenhua yanjiu*. Yanji: Yanbian renmin chubanshe.

⁴⁰⁷ Yanbianzhou *Minwei* 1997, 16.

The discussions conducted in the journals at least demonstrated that Yanbian was aware not to lose the trusting relationship it had built up with Beijing, which had allowed to the deepening of links with South Korea, but at the same time, wary of the ambiguous situation.

Reflections on Xinjiang and Yunnan

Xinjiang has been able to attract investments from a transnational community which has been based on religious, ethnic and family ties. Arab countries have invested in Xinjiang and donated money for the reconstruction of mosques and religious schools. However, by the early 1990s, the attempts to use Islam as a pretext for economic cooperation had not been very successful, yet, mainly due to a lack of tradable goods.⁴⁰⁸ This kind of cooperation has mainly been linked to China's interest to pursue close relations with oil-producing countries. China has wanted to project a Muslim friendly country image⁴⁰⁹ and accordingly has even consented to cooperation which is related to religion. Presumably, Party-approved religious leaders who regularly visited Mecca and foreign centres of Islamic learning, were also linked to the trade promotion campaigns. Further, the Chinese Islamic Association may also have had a role in the promotion of trade with Muslim countries, too.

The opening of borders paved the way for Xinjiang's ethnic minority traders to launch business both in the border area and also beyond, to the other side of Turkish Central Asia. Regional cooperation was supported by a vision to a new Silk Road. Many ethnic minority traders were able to profit from trade, or from different kinds of middleman services, between Central Asian traders and local Han Chinese, particularly after China had established relations with the newly independent Central Asian states. Yet, the role of local ethnic minority middlemen has declined in Xinjiang, as Han Chinese manufacturers have been able to establish their own direct contacts with Central Asian businesspeople.⁴¹⁰

In Xinjiang, the organs responsible for overseas Chinese affairs increased their involvement with ethnic minorities in the mid-1990s. The development of these activities in the 1990s is described in a report of the Overseas Chinese Association of an agricultural division of the

⁴⁰⁸ Roy 1998, 51-52; Harris 1993, 119-120.

⁴⁰⁹ Gladney [1991] 1996, 334; 2004, 115.

⁴¹⁰ Roberts 2004, 224.

Production and Construction Corps⁴¹¹, in the western area of Ili. The Association conducted a local survey in the middle of the 1990s, to ascertain the actual number of households which had relatives abroad. Previously, many of those families with overseas relatives had chosen not to be in contact with the overseas Chinese organs because of the problems that cross-border ties had created during the Cultural Revolution, when they had been accused of illicit relations with foreign countries. Further, many had left China for political reasons, which did not create a fruitful basis for any government-sponsored liaison activities. However, during this survey, ethnic minority families were informed about the new affirmative regulations regarding overseas relatives, so that after this survey, the registered number of households with relatives abroad rose from 871 to 1,374. These households were then encouraged to engage in new projects together with the overseas (or better "overland") relatives.⁴¹² Because cross-border family contacts remained a politically sensitive issue, many ethnic minorities still refrained from registering as "dependants of overseas Chinese".⁴¹³

In Yunnan, cross-border ethnic relations have spurred small scale trade practices. In addition, they have channelled investments to the area. In Yunnan, too, these organs engaged in overseas Chinese affairs, have also dealt with relations with the foreign relatives of local ethnic minority people. At least one village of the Bai-nationality (Xizhou) and several villages of the Hui-muslims (Wenming, Dabaiyi, Nagu) have been classified as *qiaoxiang*, i.e. home regions of overseas Chinese.⁴¹⁴ In addition, an official report noted that ethnic minorities accounted for 90 per cent of the overseas Chinese compatriots of Xishuangpanna, and also affirmed that overseas Chinese contacts have been an important source of investments for the area. For example, 60 per cent of foreign investments were made by the overseas Chinese, and they have also contributed donations worth over RMB 10 million. These relatives had also made book donations to schools and financially supported teacher training. Except for one investment made by a Hong Kong compatriot, no mention was made of which countries the donations came from.⁴¹⁵ Another example is provided by the the

⁴¹¹ The Production and Construction Corps (*Bingtuan*) was until recently a para-military unit. It was formed from the soldiers who were stationed in Xinjiang in 1954. Currently, it mainly focuses on economic activities and has dominated the economy of Xinjiang since its foundation. For example, in 2003 it conducted a third of the region's foreign trade. Xinjiang shengchan jianshe bingtuan 2004

⁴¹² *Zhongguo qiaowang* 1999.

⁴¹³ *Zhongguo Qiaolian xinxiwang* 2004; *Huajia jingweiwang* August 22 2003.

⁴¹⁴ Yunnansheng renmin zhengfu qiaowu bangongshi 2001 and 2005. *Zhongguo qiaowang* 2005a.

⁴¹⁵ Yunnansheng renda changweihuiwaishi huaqiao gongzuo weiyuanhui 2004.

Yingjiang county which has received investments from Yunnanese ethnic minority people who emigrated to Burma during the Cultural Revolution, the value of which exceeded RMB 10 million. Such agreements were made during their visits to their home villages.⁴¹⁶

There is also some evidence for larger scale regional ethnically-based trade, although I was unable to obtain any accounts of official attempts to promote it. Among the Yunnanese ethnic groups, for example the Hui-Muslims possess transnational business relations. The *Huizu*, too, have a long tradition of commerce and trade, one which is also officially acknowledged in China.⁴¹⁷ In this, they have been engaged in regional trade along the "Southwestern silk road" and also acted as middlemen between the Han Chinese and traders from Southeast Asia. Yunnan, too, has Hui-networks in Thailand, Myanmar and other Southeast Asian countries. Thailand, which is the only wealthier neighbour of Yunnan, has a current population of about 50,000 *Huizu*. In addition to their engagement in trade with Yunnanese *Huizu*, some of them have also donated money for the construction of mosques.⁴¹⁸ The Tai in Xishuangpanna have also been engaged in trade with Thailand and these ethnic links have generated donations to Buddhist monasteries.⁴¹⁹ Although Chinese researchers are aware of the existence of wider economic networks, the general attitude is that the development of cross-border economic activities is difficult because of the low "quality" of the ethnic groups.⁴²⁰ Xiangming Chen, who has studied regional economic cooperation in Pacific Asia, maintains that in the Mekong River sub-region the ethnic Han Chinese networks have been more active in developing regional trade than any other cross-border ethnic groups in the area.⁴²¹ As such, this could also be put the alternative way and speculate that Yunnan has not found it worthwhile to develop regional trade based on its ethnic minority networks.

However, in Yunnan at least, ethno-political issues have not obstructed the expansion of the cross-border links. This was confirmed by the anonymous writers from the Yunnan Public Security College in an article on the cross-border issues and national security in Yunnan, in

⁴¹⁶ Ma Taijiang & Wei Cheng'er 2001, 37.

⁴¹⁷ Ma Weilian 1998, 34.

⁴¹⁸ Yao Jide 2003, 36; Zhang Zuo 1998, 12, 15, 16.

⁴¹⁹ Hansen 2004, 78.

⁴²⁰ Eg Li Shaoming & Yang Jianwu 2000, 4; Shen Xu 1998; Liu Zhi 1992; Si Feng 1996.

⁴²¹ Chen 2005, 205.

which they stated that there were no severe threats of ethnic separatist activities in Yunnan.⁴²² Thus, when compared with Xinjiang and Yanbian, the basic circumstances for regional transnational economic activities were politically less sensitive. From this standpoint, the circumstances were favourable for the expansion of cross-border ethnic activities; yet, there was lack of interest in developing ethnically-based economic cooperation beyond the small-scale trade in the border area. The reasons for this might be found in the belittling of the capacities of the ethnic minorities, and in the strong regional Han Chinese networks existing.

Thus, how does this comparison sharpen our analysis of Yanbian? Comparison with Xinjiang and Yunnan, highlights the absence of religion in the ethnically-based cooperation. The option to draw on the common religion, Christianity, was possible, but was probably considered less useful when alternative but more evident and less political commonalities could be marshalled. Further, in contrast with some regions of Xinjiang and Yunnan, Yanbian has not been officially declared as a *qiaoxiang* of ethnic Koreans.

The role of business middlemen in Xinjiang and Yanbian bear similarities. In both areas, the ethnic minorities acted as bridges, linking traders from kin-states with Han Chinese companies. Yet, in both cases the role of middlemen declined when direct contacts were established between foreign traders and the Han Chinese -dominated local businesses, and some extent, the ethnic minorities have lost their advantageous edge.

Next, does this comparison help in the analysis of the impact of the political sensitivity of cross-border ethnic ties on Yanbian? A comparison with Xinjiang highlights the importance of a trustworthy relationship. Without the trust of Beijing, the Yanbianese officials could not have promoted ethnically-based ties with South Korea as extensively as they did. As in Xinjiang, any such attempts would have remained more restricted. In Yunnan, the political factor was not strong. Nevertheless, except for border trade, ethnic networks did not appear to have a central role in the work to attract investments and promote trade. This highlights the significance of other factors than ethno-political ones as hindrance to the development of cross-border economic cooperation, and it gives a reason to pursue a balanced evaluation of

⁴²² Yunnan gong'an gaodeng zhuanke xuexiao 2003a and 2003b.

the impact of the ethno-political questions on cross-border activities. The political issues should not be overemphasized at the expenses of other important factors.

Conclusions

This chapter has described how the Korean ethnic and personal ties were mobilized by local officials for their area's economic development. Leaning on the traditions of the overseas Chinese work, the Yanbian administration was able to mobilize various ethnic Korean resources for the development of the Prefecture. In comparing the overseas Chinese work with the mobilization of ethnic Korean networks, there were similarities in activities, but clear differences, in the combination of the organs engaged in them. The main organ for the overseas Chinese work, the *Qiaoban*, was not involved in the work during the period of which this research covers. In addition, the administration of transnational relations of the ethnic minorities was less institutionalized, less centralized but more politicized when compared with coastal regions. In the border regions, there were clear regional differences in the management of the economic transnational relations of the ethnic minorities. Despite the fact that the management of the transnational ties was regionally fragmented, the policy was consistent as it served the state-sanctioned development plans. Although political and security issues have had an impact on the overseas liaison activities, even on China's coastal areas, the concern for separatist activities was emphasised in Yanbian, and put additional constraints on the local attempts to create links with foreign Korean businesspeople. Some officials wanted to refrain from the development of links with South Korea, in order to secure their own careers. In the late 1990s, concern arose even in Beijing about the endurance of the assumed loyalty of Yanbian Koreans toward China, which, in turn raised further caution in Yanbian.

While the local government's scope and method of action in regard to foreign relations were restricted by the limits defined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the various types of associations provided flexible multiple-purpose tools for the promotion of links with foreign countries. The semi-official associations were created solely to serve the Government and the Party and they undertook liaison work at a high level of institutionalization – with companies, government units and educational institutions. The unofficial associations, which were linked to the local political elite, had more autonomy, and their activities served both the interests of their members and the government. These associations worked to smoothen the relations

between Yanbian and foreign cooperation partners through economic, political and cultural channels. At the same time, they aimed to expand interactions with foreign Koreans on different levels of institutionalization. The unofficial popular associations, which were not closely linked to the elite, undertook PR-work at the grassroots level. In a symbiosis with the local state, they pursued their own interests in the international realm whilst also accepting the guidance and the directions of the state.

The main target group of these mobilization activities have been foreign Koreans. They have been approached calling upon family and other interpersonal ties, and emphasizing the cultural koreanness of Yanbian. The main interest has been to attract financial capital and new technologies. New migrants, who have left Yanbian since the early 1990s, have not yet become a focus for these activities. Compared with the overseas Chinese work in the coastal regions, the attempts in Yanbian have been less successful for several reasons; mainly, the Koreans in Yanbian and abroad are not comparable with the coastal Han Chinese and overseas Chinese in their business orientation. Furthermore, the business environment in Northeast China, and especially its border regions, are not as attractive as China's coastal regions.

When compared with Xinjiang and Yunnan, transnational ethnic and family ties of the ethnic minorities, have been more important in the official attempts to promote the local economy in Yanbian. The reason for this lies in the existence of a wealthy kin-state of South Korea, and the previously established trustworthy relationships between the central government and Korean cadres in Yanbian.

4. UTILIZATION OF ETHNICALLY-BASED INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION ON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

International Migration from China, Yanbian in Particular

Emigration patterns show great regional variations in China. In their study on migration from Fujian, Pieke and his colleagues found that emigration is strongly embedded in local structures and histories. For this reason, mobility from each area in China is highly specific.⁴²³ Southern coastal provinces, which have long migration histories and tradition of entrepreneurship, have developed the most vibrant emigration patterns from China, for example sending several waves of migrants to Southeast Asia and, since the 19th century, also to other continents. One of the larger waves occurred two hundred years ago as China's coastal areas became an important source of labour for the Western colonialist rulers and the United States. Just via Hong Kong, an estimated 6.3 million migrants left between 1868 and 1939. Many of labourers were contracted workers, who comprised part of the infamous "coolie" trade.⁴²⁴

In addition to tradition, Xiang Biao, who has specialized in international migration from China, proposes that one reason for the different emigration patterns, can be found in the economic politics of the Mao-period, and also suggests that one reason for the current large-scale emigration from Fujian and Zhejiang, can be traced to their neglected position in national economic plans of the Mao-period. As provinces which border Taiwan, these areas received less resources from the centre, although at the same time faced less administrative interference. As such, these areas were able to develop private economies earlier than other parts of China, which contributed to the capital mobilization for migration. At the same time, economic development resulted in greater economic disparities between people, which prompted the less affluent to seek their fortune abroad.⁴²⁵

⁴²³ Pieke et al. 2004, 37.

⁴²⁴ Huang & Pieke 2003, 20; Skeldon 2004. About coolie trade, see Farley 1986

⁴²⁵ Xiang 2003, 24.

Differences in the patterns of migration were significant even within provinces. At a local level these seemed to emerge from the different traditions of migration and the degree of involvement of local government in emigration. In their study on emigration from Fujian, Pieke and his colleagues observed that a mountain village with no prior emigration history but a strong governmental support for labour export had different migration patterns than did a coastal village with dense transnational contacts and a long history of maritime travel and migration.⁴²⁶ Hence, a study of Chinese emigration must be placed in a sub-provincial historical and administrative-political framework.

General Developments in International Labour Migration from China

As a part of its development aid cooperation, the People's Republic of China commenced official international labour cooperation in the 1950s. It sent workers, mainly as experts, to work in infrastructure development projects in target countries.⁴²⁷ As its foreign policy priorities shifted in the late 1970s, from developing countries to Western developed countries, China turned from being an aid giver to an aid receiver.⁴²⁸ As a result, politically motivated foreign-aid tied labour cooperation began to decline in volume. State-owned companies, which were previously engaged in aid projects, continued to supply labour to commercial projects in foreign countries, but instead of experts, low-skilled workers were dispatched abroad. Gradually, a labour export business developed.⁴²⁹ By early 1978, the state had established three new labour contracting companies. However, initially such labour cooperation found little support or interest, as it was equated with the "coolie" trade of the 19th century, and thus regarded rather as shameful to the country. Over time though, this attitude dissipated with time.⁴³⁰ At the beginning, the aforementioned target countries were mainly in the Middle East and Africa. However, companies in some coastal provinces initiated labour contracts with nearby regions. For example, Fujian had close links with Hong Kong and Macao, and the state-owned companies in the province began to dispatch workers to these areas in 1985.⁴³¹ By 1987, China already had 74 companies engaged in international

⁴²⁶ Pieke et al 2004, 51.

⁴²⁷ He Xiankai 1988, 167, 169.

⁴²⁸ Yahuda 1995, 147.

⁴²⁹ Wu Guocun 1993, 207; Xiang 2003, 32; *China Daily* 3 August 2004

⁴³⁰ He Xiankai 1998, 170; Wu Guocun 1993, 254-255.

⁴³¹ Liu Yisheng 1995, 32.

labour cooperation, and all provincial level governments, except Tibet and Qinghai, had established at least one such company.⁴³² By 1990, the accumulated number of dispatched workers exceeded 400,000, of which the majority were sent to Asian countries and the Middle East.⁴³³

In 1985, China enacted a new emigration law, which permitted ordinary citizens to apply for a passport which paved the way for unofficial labour migration to develop. The basic requirements for a successful application were an invitation letter and sponsorship from overseas.⁴³⁴ However, although international travel then became possible it did not necessarily mean that going abroad was an easy task. In addition to an invitation from abroad and proof of funding, the passport application had to be enclosed with the approval of the spouse and the employer too, if the applicant was state institution employee. An emigrant also had to arrange a guarantee payment required to ensure that the migrant returned in due course. However, since 2002, these requirements have been gradually relaxed. In 2005, the acquisition of a passport was simplified and an applicant now only need to attach birth and household certificates to the application. Nevertheless, acquiring a visa remains a significant obstacle for ordinary Chinese citizens, who have neither connections with the destination country, nor any official position.⁴³⁵

From the 1950s until the 1990s, domestic migration was restricted in China, and well in the 1980s, emigration was still regarded as a betrayal of the country. However, gradually, due to its positive impact on economic development and social stability, international migration became approved by the state. In his article on Chinese "new migrants", Pál Nyíri identifies how emigration is currently regarded as a patriotic act and that the state leadership now values the role of migrants on the economic development of the country.⁴³⁶

⁴³² He Xiankai 1988, 172.

⁴³³ Wu Guocun 1993, 217.

⁴³⁴ Xiang, 2003, 26. Law of the People's Republic of China on the Administration of the Exit and Entry of Citizens. Standing Committee of People's Congress 1985.

⁴³⁵ Pieke et al 2004, 86.

⁴³⁶ Nyíri 2001, 635.

"Irregular migration",⁴³⁷ i.e. the kind which did not take place in accordance with all the relevant regulations, began to expand in China in the early 1990s, and to manage this emerging problem, the national level authorities initiated the work to enact new legislation. In 1992, the State Council urged the relevant authorities to create a framework to tackle the problems.⁴³⁸ The same year, three documents were issued to deter irregular emigration and regularize labour export services.⁴³⁹ Additional measures were taken to curb the illegal activities in five southern provinces. Social order in migrant sending areas was not the only concern of the leadership, but also the international reputation of China and the general conditions of Chinese workers abroad, too. Between 1992 and 2003, the Ministry of Foreign Economic Cooperation and Trade (MoFTEC, since 1998 Ministry of Commerce MofCom) issued alone, or with other related organs, over 30 legal documents at national level in order to enhance the general management of labour export and the training of prospective migrants. The MoFTEC also stipulated new specific regulations for maritime workers and promulgated several country or area specific policies.⁴⁴⁰ However, the effectiveness of these regulations' implementation at the local level is open to question, as according to Yang Zhong, "laws and regulations are routinely violated by local authorities due to a lack of a sense of the rule of law and weak monitoring systems on the part of authorities".⁴⁴¹

Considering its overall population, China is still a minor participant compared with other labour exporting countries. According to the statistics of the MofCom, in 2003, Chinese companies had sent 532,000 Chinese regular migrants abroad in 2003.⁴⁴² In comparison, the largest labour exporter in East and Southeast Asia, the Philippines, had dispatched 868,000 workers overseas the same year through regular channels.⁴⁴³ The relatively few Chinese regular international migrants probably relates to its bureaucratic emigration procedures, but

⁴³⁷ I substitute this term to that of "illegal migration", and so to avoid the judgemental criminalization of the migrants, since the division between legal and illegal migrant is often unclear; moreover, in many cases migration and employment arrangements are a mixture of both legal and illegal practices, and migrants themselves are not always aware that they are involved in illegal practices.

⁴³⁸ Chin 2003, 61.

⁴³⁹ Laodongbu 1992a, Jingwai jiuye fuwu jigou guanli guiding; Laodongbu 1992b, Laodongbu guanyu zuo hao laowu shuchu, jingwai jiuye laodong guanli gongzuo de tongzhi 1992 [37]; Guowuyuan qiaowu bangongshi deng bumen 1992, Guanyu jinyibu fangfan he zhizhi woguo gongmin feifa yiju guowai de yijian 1992 [13].

⁴⁴⁰ Henan Jingmaowang 2005.

⁴⁴¹ Zhong 2003, 139.

⁴⁴² Zhongguo duiwai chengbao gongcheng shanghui 2004b, 10. I am grateful to Chen Risheng for introducing this material for me.

⁴⁴³ Phillipines Overseas Employment Administration (2005)

international migration from China can be expected to increase with China's integration into the world economy and the launch of the GATS-agreement which seeks to liberate trade on services.

The Development of International Labour Migration from Yanbian

The development of official labour export from Yanbian can roughly be divided into three periods: 1984-1992, 1992-1998 and 1998- to date. During the first period, Yanbian dispatched scattered groups of contract workers abroad, the first in 1984. Until 1991, labour export from Yanbian was characterized by generally restricted contacts with foreign countries, capitalist countries especially and South Korea in particular. Yet, there was also a growing interest toward a labour export business. Labour export contracts with South Korea were made through third countries or South Korean companies active elsewhere than on South Korean soil, which sought a cheap Korean-language labour force abundantly available in Yanbian. In 1989, a South Korean –sponsored training centre for textile workers was established in Yanji, to cater to the needs of the South Korean multinational textile industry.⁴⁴⁴ In the late 1980s, as the Sino-Soviet relations improved, labour export to the adjacent regions of the Soviet Union emerged, too, following Gorbatschov's Vladivostok speech in 1986, in which he expressed his willingness to improve ties with China. For example, after this improvement, the city of Hunchun sent a group of workers to the Soviet Union in 1988 to work in crop farming.⁴⁴⁵

As the one and only local foreign trade corporation in Yanbian did not have a license to engage in labour export during this period, the workers who were sent were mainly recruited by a provincial-level company, Jilin International Economic and Technical Corporation (JIC).⁴⁴⁶ Compared with China's coastal regions, there was no negative "coolie"-trade heritage of which would have hindered the development of labour export.

⁴⁴⁴ Zheng Chengji 1995, 3; *Far Eastern Economic Review* 12 July 1990; Yanbian minzu fuzhuang youxian gongsi 2004.

⁴⁴⁵ Che Zhejiu 1992, 15.

⁴⁴⁶ Jin Dong et al 1996, 55, 56.

As the living standard of Yanbian Koreans declined in the 1980s, they became eager to move on to greener pastures so as to maintain their relatively high standard of living. Cities especially attracted the Korean population. Between 1982 and 1990 the number of Koreans resident in cities grew by 40 per cent. They moved not only to northeastern cities, but many also took the southward direction. During the same period, the Korean population in the coastal provinces of Guangdong, Hainan, Shandong and Jiangsu more than tripled.⁴⁴⁷ Mobility on such a scale was facilitated by the expansion of the right to movement, and when travel abroad was permitted, the scope of this mobility widened. In the mid-1980s, "leave-the-country-fever" (*chuguore*) swept over the Chinese Korean population – a trend confirmed by my local acquaintances, who reported that as soon as it was permitted to recruit in companies in the Soviet Union or to visit North Korea, Koreans in particular, grabbed the opportunity to venture over the border in order to make their fortunes. They portrayed the Chinese Koreans as more ready to move compared with the Han Chinese who were more tied to their ancestral home village.⁴⁴⁸ However, this was only an imagined feature of the local Han Chinese, since both Koreans and Han Chinese populations of Yanbian had their main origins in the migration which occurred after 1860, when the Manchu-dynasty permitted migration to their "sacred home regions" in Manchuria. But perhaps, the important difference which contributed to the international mobility of the Koreans, was the fact that they had personal relations and ethnic ties to foreign countries which made their mobility easier.⁴⁴⁹

Since it had been permissible from 1985 for Chinese Koreans to visit relatives in South Korea, the flow of people from Yanbian to South Korea slowly but steadily increased. However, in the beginning most of the migrants did not consider finding employment in South Korea, but instead, earned extra money through the shuttle trade based on tourism. This shuttle trade (*baoguo shengyi*) had already been vibrant in the 1950s between Yanbianese and North Koreans,⁴⁵⁰ and emerged again in the 1980s, as the Yanbianese gained the opportunity to visit their relatives in North Korea and later the Soviet Union / Russia. When it was permitted to visit South Korea, the flow of shuttle traders then shifted toward that country. Small-scale trade in South Korea became immensely popular as it became known that Chinese herbal

⁴⁴⁷ Jin Binggao 1992, 18.

⁴⁴⁸ Discussions with Yanbian Koreans 1996, 2004.

⁴⁴⁹ Interview 4, Yanbian 1996.

⁴⁵⁰ Zheng Yushan 2000.

medicine was in huge demand there. Yanbianese Koreans made small fortunes selling herbs in South Korean street markets.⁴⁵¹

The establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in 1992 caused a South Korea "fever" in Yanbian. At this time the small scale trade had lost its popularity as the demand for the Chinese herbs had slumped following accusations of trade in fake herbs. Instead, employment while visiting relatives gained popularity and turned into a new trend, as at that time, it was possible to earn in just one month a sum equivalent to a 2-5 years' average income in Yanbian.⁴⁵² When South Korea initiated an industrial training system in 1991, as a reaction to a severe labour shortage, which had handicapped South Korea companies since the late 1980s, labour migration to it became easier. This training system covered only South Korean companies investing overseas at first, but in 1993 it was extended to firms also operating in South Korea.⁴⁵³ The employment system then allowed the recruitment of foreign Koreans who were relatives of South Koreans. Foreign Koreans who were blood relatives of the eighth degree and relatives by marriage up to the fourth degree were eligible to apply for a job in South Korea. Further, descendants of Korean freedom fighters of the Japanese colonial period, were also given the opportunity to apply for a visa.⁴⁵⁴ By the middle of the 1990s, an estimated 10 per cent of Chinese Koreans had visited a foreign country. This percentage was highest among China's nationalities.⁴⁵⁵

However, as all Yanbian Koreans did not have South Korean relatives⁴⁵⁶ who could send them invitations needed for a visa, there soon emerged a chaotic migration business which bred less than trustworthy brokers. The local administration was at pains to react to this situation. The foreign trade administration was not experienced in international cooperation and officials were imbued with loyalty towards North Korea but suspicion towards South

⁴⁵¹ Wang Tiezhi & Li Hongjie 1997, 19-20.

⁴⁵² Rim 1996, 144.

⁴⁵³ Park 2002, 72, 75-76.

⁴⁵⁴ Korea International Labour Foundation 2004. The eighth degree refers to the great-grandchildren of great-grandfather's brothers.

⁴⁵⁵ Rim 1996, 139.

⁴⁵⁶ Yanbian Koreans wanted to make friends with South Korean tourists, students or business people so as to enter South Korea. Some of them asked for help in finding a work place in South Korea while others suggested the creation of a supposed family connection, which could then help them to obtain a visa to South Korea. This strategy was possible, since, in many cases, it was rather difficult to prove any falsity in the claimed family ties. Similar networking also took place between Yanbian Chinese and North Koreans. Informal discussions, Yanbian 1996.

Korea. Thus, to regularize the labour-export business, the Yanbian government issued local temporary regulations in 1993 for the management of labour-export cooperation, which was followed by a circular on labour export management in the following year. The Department of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation also issued a circular on the examination and approval of labour-export agencies.⁴⁵⁷ Nevertheless, in the latter part of 1993, unlicensed labour migration agents mushroomed in Yanbian. In 1994 over 60 illegal companies or agents, that had recruited over 6,000 people, were caught.⁴⁵⁸

With the object to create more legal migration channels, two local companies were given licenses to undertake labour export cooperation with South Korea in late 1993. Thus, the official labour export from Yanbian to South Korea only began at the beginning of 1994.⁴⁵⁹ Nevertheless, official labour export continued to be conducted mainly via the JIC,⁴⁶⁰ if in a rather cumbersome manner, as, presumably, the Yanbian companies lacked experience, resources, and contacts. However, these initial efforts to establish order into the labour-export markets were unsuccessful. In 1995 and 1996, more than 10,000 Chinese Korean families lost their savings and properties when their family members had paid fraudulent migration brokers for fake migration documents. Most of these swindlers were South Koreans.⁴⁶¹ While Yanbian was recovering from these shocks, the Asian financial crisis broke and the demand for cheap labour slumped in South Korea, and the salaries paid to trainees temporarily fell to the same level as those in Yanbian.

The period since 1998 has been characterized by the attempt of the Yanbian government to respond to the tough experiences of the mid-1990s, and the government has gradually attempted to create a coherent labour-export infrastructure. These goals were published in the local five year plan for the years 2001-2005.⁴⁶² Since 1990, the annual work plans of the prefectural government (*zhengfu zhuyao renwu* or *zhengfu gongzuo renwu*) have referred to

⁴⁵⁷ Guanyu jiaqiang guoji laowu hezuo guanli de zanzing guiding, 1993; Guanyu jianqiang quanzhou laowu shuchu guanli de tongzhi, 1994 [13]; Guanyu dui guoji laowu hezuo weituo daili danwei zige shending de tongzhi, 1994. Li Haiyu 2004, 22; Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 1994b, 257.

⁴⁵⁸ *Yanbian Ribao* 26 July 1997.

⁴⁵⁹ Li Haiyu 2004, 24.

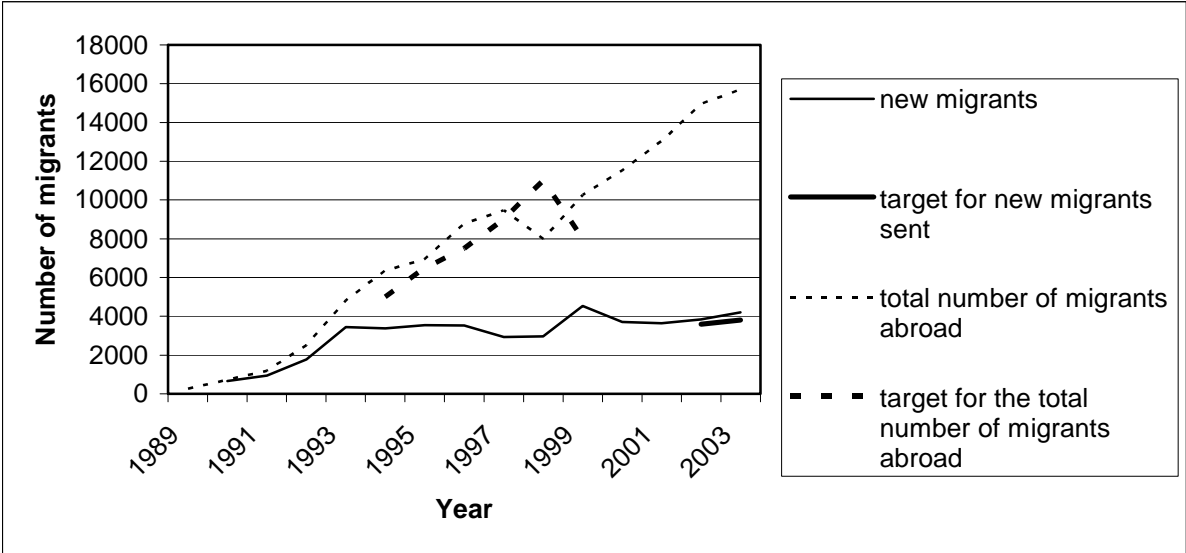
⁴⁶⁰ Jin Dong et al 1996, 56.

⁴⁶¹ *The Korea Herald* 5 December 1996

⁴⁶² Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 2001.

labour export.⁴⁶³ Compared with the early short notions on the need to expand labour export, labour export began gradually to gain more attention in this type of document. From 2001 on, the work plans described the labour-export targets in several sentences.

Figure 5. International Labour Export through Regular Channels, and Labour Export Targets in Yanbian



"New migrants" refer to those that are dispatched abroad during the particular year.

Sources: New migrants: Yanbian touziwang (2006). Waipai laowu lishi jilü.
 Total numbers of migrants: Li Haiyu (2004). *Yanbianzhou guoji laowu hezuo de xianzhuang ji fazhan qianjing*. Yanji: Yanbian University, 19, 20, 22;
 Targets: Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu. *Zhengfu gongzuo baogao*, various years.

NB. Data from 2000 is missing. The "Zhengfu gongzuo baogao" of 2001 and 2005 do not specify the labour export targets in numbers. For 2002 and 2003, the target has been given in terms of the figures for new migrants.

The first concrete step to strengthen the management of labour export was taken in 2001, when Yanbian issued the first ever local level law on labour export in China.⁴⁶⁴ Other specific tasks mentioned in the annual work plans, have been the broadening of the labour-export

⁴⁶³ Labour export was mentioned in the mid-term five-year plan of the prefecture, published in 1988, but not in the annual work plan which was included in the same document as the mid-term plan. In 1990, labour export was taken up in the annual work plan document. The work plan of 1993 mentioned, for the first time, an exact numerical target for labour export. Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 1988, 1989, 1990, 1993a.

⁴⁶⁴ Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizhou duiwai laowu hezuo guanli tiaoli. Yanbianzhou renmin daibiao dahui changwu weiyuanhui 2001.

markets to diminish dependency on South Korea, and the training of the migrant labour force. Since 2003, the government has also began to pay attention to the impact of migrant remittances on the local economy.

In 2002, there were close to 120,000 Chinese Korean migrant workers in South Korea, of whom some 40,000 came from Yanbian.⁴⁶⁵ The majority of these worked without proper documents. In addition to South Korea, Yanbian Korean labour migrants are nowadays found in other Asian countries, and beyond. About half of the migrants were from rural areas while the other half was laid-off urban workers, who usually took work which did not require high skills, e.g. men worked mainly on constructions sites, in fishery or seafaring industries and women in factories or the service sector. Indeed, the number of female migrants had gradually increased, so that, in the first years of the 21st century, over half of the ethnic Korean international migrants from Northeast China were women. Higher-skilled migrants moved mainly to South Korea, Singapore and Japan. An increasing number of Han Chinese also found their way abroad. Yet, with regard to international migration overall, ethnic Koreans still outnumber the Han Chinese among those migrants who left Yanbian.⁴⁶⁶

The Labour Export Organs in Yanbian

Organs Engaged in International Migration in China

Xiang Biao has found both coherence and fragmentation in China's policy towards emigration. Migration policies have been coherently linked to China's overall plans, which aim for economic development. Alternatively, the management of migration issues has been fragmented, because of the newness of the issue, and the allocation of migration related issues to different government departments.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁵ The total number of Yanbian Koreans in South Korea in 2002 was 48,000, of which, presumably, the majority were employed there. Jin Zhongguo 2003.

⁴⁶⁶ Interview 14 and 19, Yanbian 2004; Cao Shanyu 2005; In the late 1990s, 80 percent of international labour migrants who left Yanbian were ethnic Koreans. Of them, 70 per cent went to South Korea. Zheng Yushan 2000.

⁴⁶⁷ Xiang 2003, 23

In order to reorganize the labour export business, the State Council issued a decree in 1992, which defined the division of labour between the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation and the Ministry of Labour (MoL, since 1998 the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, MoLSS). According to a decree from 1992, the MofTEC also supervised the administration of labour export companies and intermediary organs, e.g. responsible for the grant of licenses and oversight of activities. The same decree stipulated that the Ministry of Labour should also oversee migrants who found overseas employment (*jingwai jiuye*) by their own means.⁴⁶⁸ The Ministry of Labour was also assigned the task to aid workers get direct contact with foreign employers. Subsidiaries of the MoL had the right to send workers abroad and act as intermediary agencies. An additional practical difference lay in the management of the emigrant workers. Those migrants who were recruited by Chinese companies, were managed by the Chinese company, even while abroad, thus they fell within the sphere of the MofTEC, but migrants who went abroad through intermediary channels and were employed by a foreign company, belonged to the domain of the MoL. Both ministries and their subsidiary units were involved in the training of prospective migrants.

Despite the initial decision by the State Council, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security has taken wider responsibilities with regard to the labour export business. The MoLSS has begun to issue licenses to labour export and intermediary companies, on other criteria than that of the MofCom. Hence, China has a two-tier system where two ministries concurrently manage labour export related affairs.⁴⁶⁹

Both the MofCom and the MoLSS have annually set a target for labour mobility – MofCom for *labour export* and MoLSS for *employment abroad*. These figures were divided up among provinces and subsequently among lower level units. At the local level, the decision on the annual targets was, in general, a two way process. Cities were able to suggest to the prefecture (or county) on their targets, based on their own capability estimations.⁴⁷⁰ The final decisions on the labour export figures were published in the annual work plans of local government

⁴⁶⁸ Xiang 2003, 33

⁴⁶⁹ Song Gang & Tong Jianfeng 2004.

⁴⁷⁰ Interview 19, Yanbian 2004.

units.⁴⁷¹ Figures for employment abroad were not publicized in the work plans but referred to in the plans of the local Departments of Labour (later the Departments of Labour and Social Security (DoLSS)). At the grassroots level, the fixed quotas were divided among the relevant units engaged in international labour mobility: labour export quotas among licensed labour export companies, and foreign employment among the Employment Bureaus (*jiuyebu*) which were subsidiaries of the DoLSS.⁴⁷² This system of annual quotas did not totally disappear, as the five year plans (*jihua*) were transformed into programmes (*guihua*) at the launch of the 11th five year plan in 2006. At least in 2006, the Yanbian Department of Labour still continued to issue annual numeric targets for employment abroad.⁴⁷³

In addition to labour export quotas, the MofCom had also decided on the regional division of international labour export. For example, South Korea was designated as a target area for labour export from northeastern and northern provinces of China. At least until 1995, other provinces were not permitted to send migrant workers to South Korea through official channels.⁴⁷⁴ However, this kind of directive appears to be no longer enforced.

In addition to the DofCom and the DoLSS, other government units have also been engaged in international labour mobility as intermediary organs. In some areas, official units such as the Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureau, the Foreign Affairs Bureau and the Taiwan Affairs Bureau have acted as intermediaries for labour migration. Furthermore, special economic zones, open ports, foreign investment companies, friendship city arrangements, Chinese foreign investments, and different kinds of associations have served as intermediaries for labour export, too. In addition to these official and semi-official arrangements, labour migration has naturally also been supported by personal contacts as well as by international tourism, studies and training.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷¹ Until 2004 the number of dispatched international labour migrants was notified in the section on foreign economic cooperation. In 2005, the number of labour migrants was referred to in the section on labour and social security issues, in which, the figure given also included domestic labour export.

⁴⁷² Interview 9, Yanbian 2004; Interview 7, Yanbian 2005.

⁴⁷³ Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu bangongshi 2006.

⁴⁷⁴ Yao Jishu 1995, 51.

⁴⁷⁵ Che Ziqiang 2005; Suggestions about possible channels, see Tang Jianchun 2000, 28.

A document on international migration in the Jilin province highlights the number of organs officially linked to international migration affairs. In addition to the provincial level Bureaus of Commerce and Labour and Social Security, all of the following have also been involved, viz: the Propaganda Department of the Party, the Public Security Bureau, the Foreign Affairs Office, the Bureaus of Finance, Civil Affairs and Education, the Offices of Land Taxation, as well as Industry and Commerce, the Planning Commission, the Trade and Economy Commission, the Agriculture Commission, the Women's Federation and finally the Federation of Trade Unions.⁴⁷⁶

Besides these regular arrangements, a number of irregular migration practices also existed, so much so that it is often difficult to discern the difference between regular and irregular emigration. For example, regular migrant workers may slip over into undocumented workers who overstay their visas or change employer. Further, since emigration from China is a complicated and cumbersome procedure for ordinary citizens, they will often rely on different kinds of migration brokers, who may then use both legal and illegal means to help their customers to get abroad and obtain employment. As this is a very lucrative business, it is probable that emigration officials and labour export agencies are involved in the issue of forged passports, invitation letters and visas.

Yanbian Organs Engaged in Labour Migration

Along with the national system, the Department of Commerce and the Department of Labour and Social Security were the main organs responsible for the management of international labour mobility in Yanbian. Until early 2000s, the Division of International Economic and Technological Cooperation (*guoji jingji jishu hezuo chu*, abbr. *hezuo chu*) at the Prefecture level Department of Commerce indirectly administered a large proportion of Yanbian's regular labour export through its companies. Only in 2004 were they separated for good through a new regulation.⁴⁷⁷ This Division was also responsible for the issue of licenses for labour export companies, intermediary agencies and training providers, and the supervision of the labour export business. However, it had no power to levy any penalties on unlicensed

⁴⁷⁶ Guanyu zai quansheng dali kaizhan laowu shuchu gongzuo de yijian 2002 [12].

⁴⁷⁷ Interview 4, Yanbian 2005.

companies, as this fell under the responsibility of the Department of Public Security.⁴⁷⁸ The Division also had a "hot line" for inquiries and complaints. While the prefecture and city level Bureaus of Commerce were mainly bureaucratic organs, the cadres involved with trade and economic issues at the village and township level undertook practical work on labour export,⁴⁷⁹ e.g. to varying degrees they were active in arranging labour export in cooperation with companies.

The Employment Office (*jiuyeju*) of the Department of Labour and Social Security acted mainly as an intermediary agent, to recruit workers according to the needs of foreign employers, although it had no direct contacts with foreign employers, but rather cooperated with intermediary "window-companies" (*chuangkou gongsi*). However, the Office had planned to establish an own "window company".⁴⁸⁰

The prefecture level Employment Office, and some of its city level bureaus, had a specific office which catered either for both domestic and international labour mobility (e.g. the Labour Export Office *laowu shuchu bangongshi*), or only for international mobility (e.g. the Overseas Office *haiwaibu*). The prefecture level office was approved as an intermediary agent with the title "Yanbian Chengxin Overseas Employment Center" (*Yanbian chengxin jingwai jiuye fuwu zhongxin*). The DoLSS had offices in cities, while in villages and townships it worked in labour mobility related issues through the Labour and Social Security Service Stations (*xiangzhen laodong baozhang fuwuzhan*, before 1998 *laodong fuwuzhan*). The DoLSS and its subsidiaries also established training centres for migrants, thus undertaking similar activities as the Department of Commerce.⁴⁸¹ In 2005 at least, it would seem that the DoLSS had a more comprehensive infrastructure in the countryside and a better grip of the concrete situation in the prefecture as regards labour mobility. At the village and township level, it worked through the service stations. The Department of Commerce concentrated mainly on the management of the companies which were located in the cities.

⁴⁷⁸ Interview 4, Yanbian 2005.

⁴⁷⁹ Interview 20, Yanbian 2004.

⁴⁸⁰ Interview with an official at the Employment Office, Yanbian 2004.

⁴⁸¹ Interview 7, Yanbian 2005; Yanbian fengcai 2004.

In addition to the DofCom and the DoLSS, other government units also were engaged in the management of labour export. The variety of the units involved is illustrated in the composition of a leaders' small group, which the prefectural government established in 2004, in order to coordinate work related to international labour cooperation and employment abroad (*Duiwai laowu hexuo ji jingwai jiuye gongzuo lingdao xiaoxu*). The members of this group were from the Prefecture Government and Departments of Commerce, Public Security, Labour and Social Security, Management of Industry and Commerce, and Foreign Affairs as well as from the Employment Office. The objective of this group was to expand international cooperation and improve its management and guidance.⁴⁸²

Mass organizations, such as the Women's Federation, were also invited to support this work. At the village level, they spread information and conducted surveys, in order to find out the particular circumstances, which was done to support the political decision making.⁴⁸³ The Federation also agreed on a trainee arrangement with a Japanese partner, which indicates a larger role in the management of migration.⁴⁸⁴ The local level branches of the state-affiliated Labour Union were assigned the task to disseminate information on the rights and duties of migrant workers.⁴⁸⁵

Other organs which acted as channels or "windows" for international labour mobility were the labour export companies, intermediary companies, and different kinds of associations. There were no South Korean labour export companies active in Yanbian, but some South Korean invested companies acted as intermediaries, which recruited workers for their units located elsewhere in China, or in other countries.⁴⁸⁶ The *Qiaoban* was not involved in labour export, at least not in 2004.⁴⁸⁷ Local associations could also act as middlemen, since if they learned about job opportunities abroad, they informed local companies about the new openings. The International Public Relations Association even acted as an intermediate agency, for a couple of years in the 1990s.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸² Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu bangongshi 2004.

⁴⁸³ Interview 22, Yanbian 2005.

⁴⁸⁴ Yanbian funüwang 2006.

⁴⁸⁵ Jilinsheng renmin zhengfu bangongting 2002.

⁴⁸⁶ Interview 4, Yanbian 2005.

⁴⁸⁷ Interview at Qiaoban, Yanbian 2004.

⁴⁸⁸ Interview with a representative of the Association, Yanbian 2005.

Yanbian had a relatively high number of labour export related companies, in fact some sources even placed Yanbian among the areas in China where the number of foreign-oriented companies is the highest.⁴⁸⁹ In 2005, there were 14 companies with state-level license, while 30 companies had a prefecture level license. The number of unlicensed companies was unknown. In cities, the labour migration business was more regulated while in the rural areas there were more illegal migration agents.⁴⁹⁰

In total, the organs engaged in international labour mobility were, to a large extent, similar than in other areas, but the difference was that the *Qiaoban* was not engaged in the business, and that the number of labour export companies and intermediary agencies was relatively large.

In the following two sub-sections, the measures that the local government in Yanbian took to make the labour migrants to acquire new capital: economic, human and social, and, the policies and practices related to the transfer of such new capital to Yanbian, will be studied.

The Promotion and Management of Ethnically-based Migration

The Political Rationale for the Promotion of Labour Export

Although economic development is one of the central policy issues, but it is also considered the most important means of maintaining social stability, too. Social and political stability gained extra emphasis in the administration of border regions inhabited by ethnic minorities, and issues connected to employment issues, living standards and interaction with co-ethnics abroad became crucial questions for the stability of Yanbian.

Northeast China has the worst unemployment figures in China. In the 1980s the closure of the production communes left millions of people out of work. Later, in 1997, as state-owned companies became the targets of economic restructuring, millions of urban workers became unemployed. By the first years of this century, the number of unemployed (*shiye*) and laid-off

⁴⁸⁹ Yanbianzhou fazhan yu gaige weiyuanhui 2005; Ximen Shunji 2003.

⁴⁹⁰ Interview 4, Yanbian 2005.

(*ligang*) workers in urban Yanbian was around 150,000 and in the rural areas there was an equal number of surplus labour force,⁴⁹¹ and the unemployment rate may have reached 30 per cent. By 2002, an estimated 12 per cent of the rural surplus labour force (45,000 persons) was employed abroad.⁴⁹² As such, it can be seen that labour export was a significant way of alleviating unemployment.

Unemployment hit both the Han Chinese and the ethnic minority population. Not all Yanbian Koreans had the social and financial capital to obtain work abroad, and even more so the Han Chinese. Together with the widening income gaps caused by the labour migration earnings, this situation created envy and a sense of a pressing need to find employment abroad, by fair means or foul, resulting in Yanbianese soon becoming easy targets for unscrupulous migration brokers. The subsequent wave of aforementioned frauds only served to generate further discontent among the locals, and the widening income gaps created between ethnic Koreans and Han Chinese presumably also negatively impacted on ethnic relations.

Moreover, the intensified contacts with South Korea were seen as a threat to the national identity of the Yanbian Koreans as it was feared that labour migration to the rich and developed kin-state would erode the national identity of the Chinese Koreans.⁴⁹³ This fear was reinforced by the activities of South Korean ultra-nationalists who desired to see a united Korea which included Yanbian.

However, the proper management of labour export, and the expansion of the migration channels, helped to counteract the negative consequences. Furthermore, the increase in income generated by labour migration helped to keep the locals content and thus promoted the maintenance of social stability, even so far as the issue of national identity became easier to manage when the Korean population became more contented with their life in Yanbian.⁴⁹⁴

In addition to the maintenance of stability, labour export was also useful for the promotion of economic development and other state-sanctioned goals, which were set by the Communist

⁴⁹¹ Shen Wangen 2002b, 1.

⁴⁹² *Xinhua* *wang Jilin pindao* 2 September 2002.

⁴⁹³ On the perceived threats to ethnic and national identity, see Wang Tiezhi & Li Hongjie 1997, 27, 28; Yanbianzhou Minwei 1997, 16.

⁴⁹⁴ Jin Zhongguo 1994a, 234

Party and subsequently included in the five-year plans and annual work targets of the local-level governments in Yanbian. For example, labour export was regarded as a powerful means to pursue such high-priority goals as to achieve a moderately well off society (*xiaokang shehui*), urbanization, diversification of the rural economy and internationalization.⁴⁹⁵ In addition, migration was regarded as a useful means to improve the "quality" (*suzhi*) of the rural population. The "quality of the population" is a broad term which can mean one's level of education, manners, moral characteristics or even appearance. Rachel Murphy has defined *suzhi* as "an amorphous concept that refers to the innate and nurtured physical, intellectual and ideological characteristics of a person". Although concerns about *suzhi* applied to the entire population, but particularly rural areas which, in general, were associated with backwardness, poverty and lack of culture, were considered to need special remedial attention. Among Chinese officials, the supposed low "quality" of the rural population was generally considered to be the main obstacle to the modernization of China.⁴⁹⁶

In Yanbian, labour export was thus closely related to questions of stability, through factors such as unemployment, inequality, fraud, ethnic relations and separatism. On these grounds then, I would argue that the proper administration and promotion of international labour migration in Yanbian was, first and foremost, important on the grounds of social stability, with economic development, in this case being of lesser importance. Only when the management of migration had gained strength, stabilizing the field to some extent, did the local government shift its attention to the economic impact of migration.

Creation and Promotion of Regular Channels

At the beginning of the 1990s, the official labour export from Yanbian was handicapped through the absence of any rights to conduct a labour-export business. Local officials had to act as intermediaries for labour-export companies, which were located in the provincial capital Changchun, or in Beijing. The big player in labour export in the Jilin province was the Jilin International Economic and Technical Corporation, JIC. Responding to the company's demand for labour, the intermediary agencies in Yanbian recruited workers for the JIC and

⁴⁹⁵ Jin Zhongguo 2003, 3; Ximen Shunji 2003; Liu Huai 2003; Interview 14, Yanbian 2004.

⁴⁹⁶ Florence 2003; Murphy 2004, 1-3. I am indebted Heike Schmidbauer for the provision of relevant material on *suzhi*.

arranged training for them. The first company to obtain labour-export rights in Yanbian, was the government affiliated Yanbian Foreign Economic and Technology Cooperation Corporation (*Yanbian duiwai jingji jishu hezuo gongsi*). This company first gained the right to send workers to the Russian Far East in 1991, and by 1993, this was expanded to all other countries in the world. An other company which had equally wide labour export rights, was the Hunchun International Technology Cooperation Company (*Hunchun guoji jishu hezuo gongsi*). Other companies were allowed to organize labour export too, in addition to these two companies, but on a smaller scale.⁴⁹⁷ By 2005, the number of licensed labour-export and intermediary companies in Yanbian had exceeded forty. In addition to liaising directly with potential employers, different kinds of business fairs provided opportunities to agree on labour export contracts. For example, the international business fairs arranged by the prefectural government in Yanbian functioned as a platform for negotiations on labour export deals.⁴⁹⁸

During the mid-1990s some township-level units of the Department of Commerce also began to act as intermediates on their own initiative which can be partly seen as a reaction to the wave of frauds. The local-level governments apparently wanted to dispel the discontent and disillusionment and restore local people's confidence in their ability to manage local affairs. They also wished to restore trust in labour migration as a meaningful way to earn a living. However, the upper levels of government also urged local level officials to transfer surplus labour forces to both domestic and international labour markets. As one official remarked:

"From the early 1990s onwards, province, prefecture and city governments have again and again called on us basic level governments, to deal with this question of the transfer of labour force, both domestically and internationally, and they have asked us to grasp this important task of increasing the income of rural villages. The higher echelons persistently support this. This is regarded as an issue which we cadres as a matter of fact have to do".⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ These other companies were allowed to draw up labour export contracts to a maximum value of USD 1.4 million, or covering up to 100 workers. Jin Dong et al 1996, 56.

⁴⁹⁸ Zhao Hongjun 2005, 34.

⁴⁹⁹ Interview 14, Yanbian 2004.

As an example of that, the government of the Zhixin Township in Longjing City was presented to me as a model unit for labour export. Since 2001, the labour-export practices created by this township have been disseminated in Yanbian. The local government took its first measures to create regular channels for labour migration in 1995. The official whom I interviewed in Zhixin, regarded labour export as an effective way of to increa rural income, diversify the means of livelihood, decrease unemployment, promote the goal of a moderately well off society and improve the "quality" (*suzhi*) of the peasant. Local officials saw it as their responsibility to make it safer, easier and cheaper for peasants to migrate in an orderly way. Thus, after a series of consultations at the local, prefectural and provincial level, in late 1995, the government of Zhixin Township initiated cooperation with the JIC. The local government established a labour export agency (*laowushuchu daili jigou*) through which the government acted as a bridge between workers and the JIC: it selected prospective migrant workers, introduced them to the JIC, and helped them to apply for passports and other necessary documents. To organize and coordinate this work, the local government established a leaders' small group (*lingdao xiaozu*), which included officials from related government organs, the Women's Federation and the Youth League. In the first year the township government dispatched some 50 workers, and annually there after around one hundred workers. In all, within a period of 10 years the government had dispatched some 1,300 workers, which meant that it had sent abroad approximately one worker from every fourth household.⁵⁰⁰ This practise also became common in some other townships and cities. The governments, or companies affiliated to them, acted as intermediary agencies to recruit workers for labour export companies.⁵⁰¹

The Zhixin Township especially helped members of impoverished households to migrate,⁵⁰² a practice that was encouraged by the prefecture's plans for poverty alleviation. A document on poverty alleviation plans for the period 1995-1998 suggested that close interpersonal relationships should be utilized to create new employment opportunities through labour export.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰⁰ Interview in the Zhixin Township.

⁵⁰¹ Interview 19, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁰² Interview in the Zhixin Township.

⁵⁰³ Yanbian chanoxianzu zizhizhou "4321" fupin zhengjian guihua. Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 1996a.

In the mid-1990s, the Employment Office of the Department of Labour also began to act as a labour recruitment agent. It sent mainly female workers to South Korean textile factories on Saipan, an island situated east of the Philippines and which belongs to the USA.⁵⁰⁴

As the migration business was rather disorganized in the mid 1990s, a variety of unofficial organs were involved with, or without, the approval of the local government. For example the International Public Relations Association was allowed to recruit some 2,000 workers over a period of three years. It assisted migrants to arrange the required documents and passport, and travelled with the work teams to South Korea. This was an exceptional case which had its background in the Association's role as an unofficial channel between the authorities in Yanbian and South Korea. In the midst of the aforementioned wave of frauds, the Association had collected data on the cases, and presented them first to prefectural and then central level government officials. Subsequently, it arranged a delegation trip to South Korea and handed over the report to a South Korean high level government official, with whom they had a long-term interpersonal relationship. The Yanbian government was prevented from such actions due to the sensitivity of the issue. As a result of this trip, many of the criminal migration brokers were arrested in South Korea. To compensate for the fraudulent deeds of co-ethnics, the South Korean side promised to arrange extra immigrant labour quotas for the Yanbian Koreans, and the Association received the mandate to recruit workers to these "reconciliation" jobs. However, as later the migration business was restricted to only licensed companies, the Association was no longer able to continue its activities as a "migration service centre", but still, continued its involvement by alternatively conducting migration-related surveys in Yanbian.⁵⁰⁵

Although unofficial associations were barred from the migration business, Party-affiliated organizations were able to act as intermediary agents, for example the Women's Federation established a co-operation relationship with a Japanese counterpart, and dispatched trainees there, ostensibly as domestic workers. The Federation also provided training for such

⁵⁰⁴ Interview at the Employment Office.

⁵⁰⁵ Interview with a representative of the Association, Yanbian 2005.

prospective domestic workers. To arrange these courses, it had sought advice from Japan and South Korea, which indicates it also trained domestic servants for South Korea.⁵⁰⁶

New Efforts to Manage and Expand International Labour Export

After the years of misfortune, 1995-98, the local government issued new regulations to manage international mobility. The development of labour export was incorporated into Yanbian's five-year plan for the years 2001-2005, and during this period the prefectural government made sincere efforts to regularize and promote the labour-export industry. It was considered a new rising field of industry, which could not only increase the people's living standards but also invigorate markets and promote the crucial social stability.⁵⁰⁷ First, a law on labour export was issued in 2001, to regularize the labour-export business and its markets,⁵⁰⁸ which, in fact, was the first local level law on labour export enacted in China. A second important step was taken in 2003, when labour export was raised to be a focal point in the annual work plan. The plan announced that labour export should be developed into a new central field of industry in Yanbian, and the local cadres were urged to work hard to expand and strengthen such an export.⁵⁰⁹ In 2003, the government also issued a supplementary document to the labour-export law, which contained detailed directions on how to implement the law.⁵¹⁰ The prefectural government also established an Association (*Yanbian duiwai laowu hezuo xiehui*) and a coordination office (*laowu xietiao bangongshi*) to enhance labour export cooperation.⁵¹¹

One key issue was the establishment of several labour recruitment bases in different parts of Yanbian. This had already been mentioned in the 1996 annual work plan, but only gained momentum in 2003. This model was also recommended by the national level Contractors Association (*Chengban shanghui*). The purpose was that village level governments act as units to organize and channel surplus labour. Recruitment would take place according to the

⁵⁰⁶ Yanbian funüwang 2006.

⁵⁰⁷ Ding Rongtai 2001, 154.

⁵⁰⁸ Yanbianzhou renmin daibiao dahui changwu weiyuanhui 2001.

⁵⁰⁹ Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 2003.

⁵¹⁰ Guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang duiwai laowu hezuo he jingwai jiuye guanli de yijian. Yanbianzhou waijingmaoju laodong he shehui baozhangju 2003b.

⁵¹¹ Ximen Shunji 2003; Yanbian touzi xinxiwang 2004

labour export contracts which the local companies agreed upon, or through intermediary companies. By the year 2004, the old recruitment units and some newly founded ones in Yanbian were linked together into a coherent structure. There were plans to establish more bases, but the final decisions were to be made later if demand for additional recruitment units arose. These bases were linked together with training centres, so as to create a twin-based system (*liangge jidi jizhi*).⁵¹²

A specific example of this new approach can be found in the city of Dunhua, in which the Bureau of Labour and Social Security had earlier run service offices at township level, but in 2004, to manage the rural excess labour force more effectively, it established a service station (*cunji laodong baozhang fuwuzhan*) in each of its 300 villages. In addition, the city also established five training centres in selected villages for migrant workers. These new units catered for both domestic and international migrants.⁵¹³

In 2004, the prefectural government took the expansion of business relations with Russia onto its agenda. This was preceded by a provincial-level plan to initiate investment activities in Russia, North Korea and in Central Asian states.⁵¹⁴ In Yanbian, the prefectural government urged local companies to tender for and invest in projects in Russia and in North Korea too, which efforts were also expected to create new opportunities for labour export.⁵¹⁵ In addition to companies, different kinds of associations were also asked to join the campaign to expand labour export channels. For example, the International Public Relations Association was mobilized to create new channels for international labour export and student exchange, through its networks in South Korea and elsewhere in the world.⁵¹⁶ The policies of rewarding successful middlemen were also extended into labour export, and accordingly, those who mediated a labour export deal were granted a reward.⁵¹⁷

In 2004, the prefecture issued a new circular to improve the management of international labour mobility. This was part of a nation-wide campaign led by the China International

⁵¹² Ximen Shunji 2003; Interview 9, Yanbian 2004; Interview 7, Yanbian 2005.

⁵¹³ Yanbian fengcai 31 October 2004.

⁵¹⁴ Ximen Shunji 2003.

⁵¹⁵ Ximen Shunji 2003 and 2004.

⁵¹⁶ Interview with a representative for the Association, Yanbian 2004.

⁵¹⁷ Yanbian touzi xinxiwang 2002.

Contractors Association.⁵¹⁸ In Yanbian, there was an urgent need for such a campaign. The issues of the circular were compressed there into three measures. Firstly, the prefectural government established a leaders' small group which focused solely on the eradication of illegal migration agents. The goal was to grab at least 10 big illegal companies. In addition to this small group, the prefecture also set up a leaders' small group for international labour cooperation and employment abroad. The second measure was to put more efforts in the dissemination of information on legitimate practices. Thirdly, the companies had to undergo self-examination and publish reports on it in order to regain the trust of their customers.⁵¹⁹

The beginning of the 21st century also saw more systematic efforts to disseminate information on migration among ordinary people. Both the Department of Commerce and the Department of Labour and Social Security were engaged in these propaganda campaigns. The Department of Commerce published information about reliable companies in a manner natural to the football crazy Yanbian Koreans: companies were ranked into A and B divisions, with the former approved by the Ministry of Commerce, while the latter were approved by the prefecture level Department of Commerce. It was possible to be promoted to the A-division through good work – then the prefecture would recommend the company to the Ministry of Commerce. Similarly, poor business conduct could relegate a company to the B-division. This ranking was first publicized in the local newspaper, the Yanbian Daily, in 2003. However, the strategy had to be changed as the target group rarely read this official newspaper. In 2004, the divisions were broadcast on the local TV.⁵²⁰

The Impact of South Korean Immigration Policies

The large number of irregular migrants was partly due to the strict immigration rules of South Korea which restricted the opportunity for small and medium sized companies to recruit low-skilled foreign workers according as they required. In South Korea, the main route for regular foreign low-skilled workers to enter the country was the trainee system, which was regulated through bilateral agreements. According to the quotas agreed between South Korea and China,

⁵¹⁸ A similar small group was established one month earlier in the China International Contractors Association. Zhongguo duiwai chengbao gongcheng shanghui 2004a.

⁵¹⁹ Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu bangongshi 2004b. Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 2004b.

⁵²⁰ Interview at the Department of Commerce, Yanbian 2004.

some twenty Chinese companies were licensed to recruit trainees.⁵²¹ In South Korea, the recruitment of trainees was supervised by the Korea International Training Cooperation Crops (KITCO), while the practical arrangements were administrated first by the Korea Federation of Small Businesses and later also by the National Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives, the Construction Association of Korea and National Agriculture Cooperative Federation.⁵²² In addition, Chinese Koreans with relatives in South Korea were allowed to work in South Korea in certain fields. However, over the years, many ethnic Koreans had lost contact with their relatives and for this reason, relied on irregular but flexible practices in order to enter South Korea.⁵²³ At the peak in 2002, there were around 266,000 undocumented migrants in South Korea, of which a large number were ethnic Koreans mainly from China, Japan and Russia.⁵²⁴ In fact, South Korea might be the only industrial country, where the number of irregular migrant workers outnumbers the documented foreign workers, which may well reflect the failure of policies and the will to curb the problem.⁵²⁵

Prior to the World Cup in 2002, which was co-organized by South Korea and Japan, irregular migrants were instructed to voluntarily register, so as to exert proper control over the vast undocumented population, and in this process, also to meet the demands of domestic and international human rights organizations on the status of labour migrants in South Korea.⁵²⁶ Thereby, those irregular migrants, who duly reported to authorities, were then granted a one-year grace period, before expulsion from South Korea. However, this regulation was considered too strict, and caused fury among Chinese Koreans, leading to around 300 of them to go on a hunger strike and many others to hold rallies. Referring to their Korean origins, they demanded the right to stay four more years so as to be able to repay their migration-loans. At this time, the well-known South Korean human rights activist, Pastor Soh Kyung-suk, who also participated in the hunger strike, reported that anti-Korean sentiments among Chinese Koreans had reached a dangerous level.⁵²⁷

⁵²¹ Zhongguo guoji laowu hezuo zhuan yewang 2005.

⁵²² Seol 2000; Seol 2005, 102; Seol & Skrentny 2005, 494-495.

⁵²³ *The Korea Times* 7 November 2005.

⁵²⁴ *Migration News* 2002a, 2002b.

⁵²⁵ Seol & Skrentny 2005, 481.

⁵²⁶ *The Korea Herald* 20 April 2002.

⁵²⁷ *The Korea Herald* 20 April 2002.

Table 5. Numbers of Chinese Korean and Han Chinese Migrant Workers in South Korea in 2001

	Professionals	Post-Training Workers	Industrial Trainees (in South Korea)	Industrial Trainees (Overseas)	Undocumented*
Chinese Koreans	268	196	13, 243	6,733	57,348
Han Chinese from the PRC	638	323	8, 629	13,499	38,277

* The source for such undocumented migrant workers possibly derives from the irregular sojourner's self-reporting data (as is the case for another table in the source material, p. 486). Adapted from Dong-Hoon Seol & John D. Skrentny (2005). South Korea: Importing Undocumented Workers. In Cornelius W et al eds, *Controlling Immigration. A Global Perspective*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 489.

Besides Yanbian, migration to South Korea was also popular among Koreans elsewhere in northeastern China. A majority of Han Chinese workers in South Korea were from the Shandong province, which is situated adjacent to South Korea. An estimated 90 per cent of the South Korean overseas Chinese have their roots in Shandong, which has certainly promoted labour migration from the province to South Korea. Zhu Huiling (2002). *Dongbeiyi diqu qiaoqing gaishu Bagui qiaokan 3*.

In response to these pressures, South Korea issued a regulation which demanded all irregular migrants to register by the end of October 2003. Undocumented migrants who worked in specific occupations were permitted to remain in their jobs, and there were also particular rules concerning ethnic Koreans, who were also allowed to retain their positions in the construction and service sectors. However, workers who had been in the country for longer than four years, or had a criminal record, had to leave South Korea.⁵²⁸ Nevertheless, in 2005 an estimated 36, 000 ethnic Koreans from China still overstayed their visa limits.⁵²⁹

Additional changes occurred when South Korea passed its Law on Ethnic Koreans in 2004, which gave first generation ethnic Koreans in China and Russia the right to apply for

⁵²⁸ *The Korea Times* 17 August 2003.

⁵²⁹ *The Korea Times* 13 February 2006.

citizenship. Under this law, ethnic Koreans who were Chinese or Russian nationals were provided with the same advantages and legal status as those already enjoyed by ethnic Koreans in the United States and Europe.⁵³⁰

In 2006, a new regulation permitted ethnic Koreans to more easily apply for a visa, and according to this new system, a work visa is now valid for up to three years. Further, ethnic Koreans who have no relatives in South Korea can also apply for the visa if they can establish that they are ethnic Koreans. Free entry and departure from the nation is now permitted for three years upon issuance. The revision also allows ethnic Koreans, who want to work in the construction or service industries, to sign a direct contract with employers without prior job agency involvement. Under this revised law they can also change their workplaces without separate permission being required.⁵³¹ This new rule was evidently a response to the complaints of the foreign ethnic Koreans and South Korean civil activists. An official of the Ministry of Justice stated that,

"[T]he policy is not to encourage an inflow of migrant workers, but to embrace ethnic Koreans as our people so as to form a Korean network."⁵³²

This comment reflects a conciliatory mood of apology and approval on the part of the South Korean government. These new regulations will probably curb illegal practices. In particular, the South Korean small and medium sized companies, of which many are dependent on cheap Korean language foreign work force, can now more easily recruit employees in an orderly way.⁵³³

Han Chinese Labour Migration from Yanbian to South Korea

While well into the 1990s most of the Yanbianese labour migrants were ethnic Koreans, Han Chinese gradually made up a larger proportion of migrants who were employed through

⁵³⁰ *The Korea Times* 10 February 2004. Hübinette 2005, 211. The Law on Overseas Koreans from 1999 granted certain rights to Koreans who had lived in South Korea in 1948, and their descendants. In this way, the Chinese, Japanese and Russian Koreans were excluded from the rights.

⁵³¹ *The Korea Times* 7 November 2005.

⁵³² Korea International Labour Foundation 2006a.

⁵³³ *The Korea Times* 7 November 2005.

official channels. This development was prompted by the efforts of the Yanbian administration and the preferences of the South Korean companies. The increase in the living standards of the ethnic Koreans created envy among the Han Chinese population. They did not possess the necessary social networks and cultural capital which would have enabled them to migrate to South Korea, but they were more dependent on the official channels provided by the companies and the labour office. This probably created pressure on local officials to provide such channels, too, for the Han Chinese population. While this might have been difficult in the beginning the situation gradually changed to their advantage, as the South Korean employers started to show a growing interest in employing Han Chinese rather than Chinese Koreans. This was especially true with regard to the trainee arrangements as Chinese Korean trainees had fallen into disrepute. They were not satisfied with the low salaries paid to the trainees and often disappeared from the working-place after they had found a better paid job elsewhere. Without proper documentation, a sum equivalent to 740€ a month could be earned, compared to just 140€ per month for trainees.⁵³⁴ This practice of job-quitting had become commonplace, so that in 2004, an estimated one-third of the Chinese Korean trainees in South Korea had quit.⁵³⁵ For that reason, some South Korean companies began to prefer Han Chinese migrant workers.⁵³⁶ Further, Han Chinese workers did not have the language skills and the social capital that would have made it easy for them to find employment elsewhere.⁵³⁷ Thus, compared with the Chinese Koreans, they obediently worked as trainees for their lower salaries. They were also less demanding as they required no special treatment as Chinese Koreans did, when referring to their Korean origins.⁵³⁸

However, the Han Chinese still were unable to enjoy similar legal privileges as ethnic Koreans. While they had begun to compete with ethnic Koreans for the trainee jobs in South Korea, the ethnic Koreans were granted new rights to enter the South Korean labour markets, new opportunities which were beyond the reach of the Han Chinese. Yet, as the employment of foreign workers was made easier through the changes in the Employment Permit System, the opportunities for the Han Chinese to find work in South Korea expanded.⁵³⁹ Nevertheless,

⁵³⁴ Interview 13, Yanbian 2004.

⁵³⁵ Li Haiyu 2004, 28

⁵³⁶ Interview 9, Yanbian 2004.

⁵³⁷ Li Bin 1999, 277.

⁵³⁸ Lee 2000c, 125; Unofficial discussions, Beijing 1996.

⁵³⁹ Korea International Labour Foundation 2005.

the new rules which covered all migrant workers were stricter when compared to the ethnically-specific regulations. As such, ethnic Koreans still maintained their edge in the South Korean labour markets.

Training Provision

On the whole, the level of education of Chinese Koreans is very high, and Chinese Koreans profess proudly that their level of education and culture is highest in the country, even when compared with the Han Chinese. Statistics support this argument.⁵⁴⁰ Thus, it would seem that the Chinese Koreans would provide an ample resource of highly-skilled migrant workers, but on closer inspection of the type of education they possess, soon it becomes apparent that this is not easily transferable into an asset on the international labour markets. The highly-educated Chinese Koreans mainly pursue studies in history, literature and arts, and moreover, they are oriented towards either a career in the government bureaucracy, or the field of the performing arts and literature, or in the media. As a result, these educated people are less inclined to seek menial albeit well-paid employment abroad. Those that did, tended more to be low-educated peasants and to some extent laid-off workers. As the industrial sector in Yanbian was dominated by the Han Chinese,⁵⁴¹ Chinese Koreans in general had neither the education nor skills needed for more advanced work in the industrial sector. This situation is probably also so in other regions inhabited by ethnic minorities in China: i.e. the industrial sector is run and staffed by Han Chinese, while ethnic minorities earn their living from the traditional occupations or work related to the maintenance of their languages and cultures as a part of the "ethnic work" (*minzu gongzuo*).

To meet the requirements of the labour markets, local officials regarded training as an essential part of labour export. At an early stage, officials realized that special occupational training was essential for the international labour export markets. Another reason for training was to equip migrant workers with some knowledge about their rights and duties. Through training, workers were also able to obtain better paid jobs and employment, in which advanced skills might also be acquired.

⁵⁴⁰ See eg Jin Guangshi et al 1997.

⁵⁴¹ Interview 4, Yanbian 1996.

In 1994, a regulation laid down that any prospective migrant, who wanted to find employment abroad through official channels, had to furnish proof of a basic-training class completion.⁵⁴² During the 1990s, training classes were mainly filled by Chinese Koreans. However, for aforementioned reasons, the Yanbianese Han Chinese gradually became more eager to migrate abroad, and consequently, began to fill the training courses. By 2004, according to some sources, the students in these classes were mostly Han Chinese.⁵⁴³ Basic training courses ran from three months to one year, depending on the amount of classes in vocational skills. The general classes for migrants included information about the intended country, basic language training as well as political and ideological education. In addition to the training of migrants themselves, some classes were also provided for the members of the migrant's household. In 2004, the training institutes located in Yanbian mainly provided classes for South Korea bound migrants. Those who wanted to obtain work, for example in Singapore, had to participate in an additional vocational course and tests in Hangzhou or in Beijing.⁵⁴⁴

The general information classes provided basic facts about the target country and covered China's foreign relations with it. In addition, the classes included information about the rules and regulations concerning the migrants' rights and duties, both in China, and in the intended country. Moreover, migrants were trained in the proper codes of conduct.⁵⁴⁵

An important part of the general education was the political and ideological classes, which had two main objectives. Firstly, since migrants were seen as representatives of China and Yanbian, it was considered important that they behave correctly and represent a positive image of their country. Thus the authorities wanted to ensure that the migrants would abide by the law and behave correctly abroad. This aspect of training became even more important when the number of job-quitters rose, and they damaged the reputation of Yanbian Koreans as good cooperation partners. Secondly, they wanted to reinforce the patriotism and loyalty of

⁵⁴² Jin Dong et al 1996, 56; In 1994, the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation initiated a project to train prospective migrants. In 1996, all labour export companies were required to arrange training classes. Zha 2002, 138.

⁵⁴³ Interview 6, Yanbian 2004; Li Haiyu 2004, 33

⁵⁴⁴ Interview 14, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁴⁵ Zha 2002, 138; Interview 9, Yanbian 2004.

migrants towards China,⁵⁴⁶ as labour migration to the rich and developed kin-state was certainly feared by the authorities to contribute to the erosion of the national identity of the Chinese Koreans. This fear was only strengthened by the activities of nationalist Koreans in South Korea. Thus, prospective migrants were given lessons in a correct national and ethnic identity, patriotism and ethnic integrity, so that they would maintain their loyalty towards China.

The contents of the classes were rather similar to other areas, with the exception of the emphasis of correct ethnic identity. A handbook of labour export from 1993 described the goals of the training in issues related to life abroad in the following way:

"Provide education in patriotism, ardent love for the Party, ardent love for socialism, capability to consciously resist the rotten ideology and style of the capitalist classes and ... to maintain the true qualities of a citizen of a socialist country, and to gain glory for the socialist homeland".⁵⁴⁷

Hence, loyalty to China and the Communist Party, and adherence to certain values, were also considered important issues in the classes provided for the Han-Chinese. The handbook mentioned education in good manners, related regulations in China and the receiving country, and the habits and religions of the receiving country as other central topics of these classes.⁵⁴⁸

Yanbian specialized in sending workers to the seafaring and knitting industries, which were pillars of the South Korean economy. In cooperation with South Korean companies, government-affiliated companies in Yanbian began to provide training in these fields for prospective migrants. The Ethnic Minority Garment Factory (*Minzu fuzhuang youxian gongsi*) established a centre to train workers for knitting factories as early as 1989. This happened after the JIC had been unable to recruit a sufficient number of skilled Chinese Korean women from Yanbian to the South Korean textile factories. In addition to technical skills, the training

⁵⁴⁶ Interview 4, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁴⁷ Zhang Guoyu 1993, 123.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

centre also placed emphasis on ethics of the workplace, a knowledge of laws and regulations, and patriotism.⁵⁴⁹

The government-affiliated Yanbian Seamen's Training Centre (*Yanbian Haiyuan peixun zhongxin*) was established as early as in 1990, and the next year the centre began to recruit students. This centre was set up in cooperation with South Korean partners through a third country, and catered for the needs of the South Korean seafaring and fishery industry. In 1995, it was upgraded to an institute and changed its name to the Yanbian Seafaring Secondary School (*Yanbian haiyang zhongdeng zhuanmen xuejiao*). In 1995, another seafaring training centre was established, again in cooperation with a South Korean partner.⁵⁵⁰ A more general training centre, The Yanbian Training College for Migrant Workers (*Yanbian chuguo renyuan peixunyuan*), was established in 1994 by the Department of Commerce. In addition to arranging the requisite training for prospective migrants, the College also provided training for officials, advice for those who had independently found work abroad, and also assisted in locating a place to study abroad.⁵⁵¹ After which, many private training centres were opened in Yanbian. In fact, during my fieldwork trip to Yanbian in 2004, I was struck by the dominance in the streetscape of advertisements for internationally-oriented training courses. (see the photo on the next page).

In the local development plan for the years 2001-2005, the training of migrants took a new significance. As previously given, in 2003 the local government put forward a proposal for the development of a twin-based system with one base for the recruitment of migrants and the other for their training.⁵⁵² This was a measure to upgrade the skills of the local labour force to meet the needs of the international labour markets, and its bold goal was to diversify labour export so as to include skilled personnel too.⁵⁵³ By the end of 2003, twelve earlier training bases established by the government-affiliated Yanbian Training College for Migrant Workers, were incorporated into the system and six new recruitment bases were established.

⁵⁴⁹ Yanbian minzu fuzhuang youxian gongsi 2004.

⁵⁵⁰ Li Haiyu 2004, 21; Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 2005a.

⁵⁵¹ Yanbianzhou duiwai maoyi jingji hezuoju 2004.

⁵⁵² Yanbianzhou waijingmaoju zhou laodong he shehui baozhangju 2003a and b.

⁵⁵³ Ximen Shunji 2003.



Bus stop language courses advertisement.

In 2004, the plan was to set up an additional three to five bases for technical training. A grand new scheme was to cooperate with the China International Contractors Association (*Zhongguo duiwai chengbao gongcheng shanghui*) to establish a national migrant training centre in Yanbian.⁵⁵⁴

Financial Assistance Provision

The highest obstacle to migration was its expenses. In general, labour migration costs to South Korea from Yanbian, were around RMB 80,000.⁵⁵⁵ The standardization of migration costs and the availability of regular financial assistance in Yanbian was important for two reasons. First, reasonable costs plus officially arranged financial support would steer migrants to make use of regular rather than irregular migration channels. Secondly, the system alleviated the financial burden of migrants and migrant households, easing migration for the Han Chinese and those Yanbian Koreans who did not have personal transnational contacts.

⁵⁵⁴ Zhu Zhezhu 2004a and 2004b; Jilinsheng xingbian fumin lingdao xiaozu bangongshi 2003.

⁵⁵⁵ Unofficial discussions, Yanji 2004.

Thus, with these measures, discontent among the less advantaged candidates for migration, could be reduced.

Prospective migrants who relied on regular channels, had to pay for the provision of a job abroad plus the fees for the requisite documents such as passport, visa and a medical certificate. Those Chinese citizens, who left China for a longer period, in addition, had to effect a guarantee payment, repayable in full, only when the migrant duly returned home. This system of guarantee deposits (*liiyue baozhengjin*) was established in order to ensure that the emigrants would abide by their work contract, and return to China at the expiration of their contract, since as mentioned previously, the temptation to abscond was great. According to a regulation from 1997, the deposit could not exceed 20 per cent of the agreed salary. To reduce the financial burden on the migrants, the Ministry of Commerce issued a new rule, as of the start of the January 2004, with the intent to abolish the old deposit system, and a written guarantee agreement was introduced instead of the former guarantee payment.⁵⁵⁶ This decision reduced the costs of migration to some extent. However, in Yanbian, the old system seemed to still be in use in early 2004. As with other new regulations, so with this case, too, it is likely take some time before it is implemented everywhere. There was probably also reluctance to abandon the original system because the deposits have provided a substantial additional income for the related units, as many migrants broke their agreements.

Since the availability of bank loans is restricted in China, other sources of funding had to be found. While it was in the interest of the local authorities to support migration, in some areas, local officials introduced alternative sources of finance for prospective migrants. For example, local governments could organize credit cooperatives to help poor peasants to migrate. In one village, between 1999 and 2002, credit cooperatives loaned more than four million RMB for migrants.⁵⁵⁷

Another way to solve this problem, was to establish local credit systems. One township government first cooperated with a local bank to test the new system, which later led to the establishment of a separate loan unit (*caizhengzhan*), affiliated to the government. This unit

⁵⁵⁶ Caizhengbu, shangwubu 2003.

⁵⁵⁷ *Xinhua* *wang Jilin pindao* 2 September 2002.

provided loans to migrants against houses or other property mortgaged, while civil servants acted as the guarantors. These units have lent between 30,000 and 800,000 RMB annually.⁵⁵⁸ After some local-level governments had made experiments with credit systems, the prefecture leaders also acted to ease the financial burdens on migrants. In 2003, in a speech by the deputy governor of Yanbian, he proposed that Yanbian should develop a unified loan and guarantee system for the whole prefecture to enhance the export of labour.⁵⁵⁹

Discipline and Loyalty Maintenance among Migrant Workers

The companies and government bureaus that dealt with labour export aimed to ensure, by various means, the proper conduct of migrants before, during and even after migration. Training was an important part of this work, but officials also took other steps to determine that the workers abided by the work-contract and the laws related to migration, and did not participate in activities harmful for the state of China. Another central goal of migrant management, was to sustain their links with the home region in order to ensure a steady flow of remittances to Yanbian. Thus, the migrant labour-force management aimed to ensure that the new capital was acquired in a proper way, and then duly transferred home.

The management of the Chinese international labour force was a regular business for all labour export companies. A handbook on labour export described the importance of this management work in following manner:

"Migrant workers are far away from family members, live in a strange country, have hired themselves out to work; it is relatively hard abroad. If their life and work are not organized properly, they very easily feel lonely which creates a feeling of uneasiness and swing in emotions, which harm work. For these reasons, the management of labour is very important. The management work shall fully take care of and show concern for them, if there are problems, pay attention, if people face problems give help, let them feel the concern and collective warmth of the large family of their homeland, remove the fear of trouble on the home front, make them wholeheartedly accomplish their jobs, win

⁵⁵⁸ Interview 14, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁵⁹ Ximen Shunji 2003.

*honour to the homeland and earn foreign currencies for the four modernizations".*⁵⁶⁰

The clear objectives of this management work were to maintain the workers' strong work discipline and loyalty to China. This was further elaborated in ten general rules, which the overseas workers had to be aware of. In addition to patriotic and socialist codes of conduct, these rules even stipulated that the migrant workers should not get organized with foreigners, nor drink excessively or spend their money in an extravagant way. Other issues in the handbook related to the conduct of the workers, included the adherence to the labour contract, the safeguarding of national interest, respect for the laws and habits of the host country and a prohibition on participation in any political activities. There were particular directions which prohibited the saying or doing of any thing which could harm China.⁵⁶¹ Thus, clearly, the political education provided, was expected to constitute an essential part of the classes.

In Yanbian, the activities and conditions of migrant workers abroad were monitored through various arrangements, for example, it was common for the labour-export companies which sent workers abroad, to also be responsible for their conduct and well-being. However, those migrants who went abroad through intermediary agencies were not managed by Yanbianese companies but only by their South Korean employers. In addition to the labour export companies, the Yanbian Department of Commerce also had a management office in South Korea, with four to five Chinese and some South Korean officials. These officials often visited companies which recruited Yanbian Korean workers to check on their working and living conditions.⁵⁶²

In some areas, to reinforce the discipline of migrants, two people in each dispatched group were selected to act as contact persons, and the sending unit frequently kept in contact with them to keep track of work performance and living conditions. A second task was also to conduct ideological work among the migrant workers abroad.⁵⁶³ To oversee the discipline,

⁵⁶⁰ Zhang Guoyu 1993, 125.

⁵⁶¹ Zhang Guoyu 1993, 126-127, 130-143.

⁵⁶² Interview at the Department, 2004.

⁵⁶³ Interview 22, Yanbian 2004.

some local governments also sent along a civil servant to work alongside with the labour migrants.⁵⁶⁴

Additionally, in Yanbian, the aforementioned guarantee system constituted one of the supervisory measures, too. In the late 1990s, the guarantee object was often the migrant's own home or other property, but it had become common to also have a financial guarantee. In the event of the migrant absconding from the work place, the household lost the guarantee. In addition to this penalty, the culprit, if located, would have to undergo some education after his return.⁵⁶⁵

An alternative non-financial system for the management of migrant workers was a collective guarantee system (*lianbao zhidu* or *lianbao zeren zhi*), by which migrants or their household members guaranteed the proper conduct of those who worked abroad. In 2004, this system was under preparation in Yanbian, and it had already been implemented in some other localities in China.⁵⁶⁶ When migrants acted jointly as guarantors, they worked abroad in turns. If the migrant, for example, violated the agreement, or did not abide by the law, not only the migrant, but also the guarantors, faced disciplinary measures. Yanbian outlined a guarantee system for five to ten households.⁵⁶⁷ This system emerged from the traditional *baojia* registration system, which had also involved a function of mutual control. In the former system, the leader of a group of households acted as the "eyes and ears" of the prefecture and county governments, through the monitoring people's movements and ensuring local security through the prevention of unlawful activities and common crimes".⁵⁶⁸ In the People's Republic of China, the *baojia*-system was replaced with the *hukou*-registration system, in which the tasks of mutual control and aid were assigned to neighbourhood, street and village committees.⁵⁶⁹ However, the *baojia*-system gradually re-emerged, as additional methods were required to control irregular practices. Nevertheless, the *baojia*-system had not been very effective during the Qing-dynasty, partly because the leaders of the groups were unpaid.⁵⁷⁰ As

⁵⁶⁴ Interview 4, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁶⁵ Interview 14, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁶⁶ Chin 2003, 64.

⁵⁶⁷ Zhu Zhezhu 2004b.

⁵⁶⁸ Zhong 2003, 29.

⁵⁶⁹ The household registration system origins go back to the first dynasties. The *baojia*-system emerged during the *Song*-dynasty as a system for defence, control and mutual help. Dutton 1992, 58, 64, 214.

⁵⁷⁰ Zhong 2003, 30, refers to Chu 1962, 152.

such, it still remains to be seen whether the collective guarantee system will succeed in the People's Republic.

Local governments wanted to liaise with the migrants for other reasons, too. As the migrant remittances were crucial for the rural areas, authorities regarded it as important that migrants maintained close links with their home region, and in order to sustain such relations, for example, local officials would send greeting letters to migrants at the Spring Festival and New Year. One informant recounted that in these letters, local officials might encourage migrants to work hard and to contribute to the economy and development of their native place.⁵⁷¹

Local officials could even be in personal contact with migrant families. On the one hand, they visited the migrant households to exchange news and to listen to the requests and needs of the migrants and their family members, and on the other hand, they could also ask family members to keep in contact with the migrants and persuade them to live up to the expectations of their parents.⁵⁷² Moreover, on some occasions, local governments would even arrange meetings for migrant households, where some pleasant repast would be served.⁵⁷³ Similar kinds of activities were suggested for the labour export companies in the aforementioned handbook of labour export.⁵⁷⁴ Naturally though, these activities only reached the regular migrants, not the irregular migrants, since undocumented migrants surely wanted to avoid any contacts with officials.

Overall, in the early years of 2000s, a new coherent structure for labour migration was gradually emerging, and the network of officially approved service centres, training centres, companies and agents stretched from the prefecture to many villages. In the most cases, these units catered both for domestic and international labour migration.

Despite these efforts, regular job-openings were few and the management of the migration business remained weak. There have been many attempts by the prefecture to regularize

⁵⁷¹ Interview 4, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁷² Interview 22, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁷³ Interview 14, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁷⁴ Zhang Guoyu 1993, 129.

labour export, but to a great extent these efforts have remained on paper. The prefecture has neither disseminated information nor monitored implementation effectively. I was made aware of this on a visit to an office which recruited migrants. I wished to discuss the document about the detailed rules for the implementation of the labour export law, but the officials were unfamiliar with it. My own print of the document was received enthusiastically, and copied on the conclusion of my interview.

By 2005, the attempts to expand labour-export channels had not increased labour export significantly and the regular migration machinery remained cumbersome, with the bureaucratic procedures for migrants being complicated. Some local researchers described the system as sluggish. Labour export remained mainly conducted indirectly through companies which were located elsewhere. It was very hard for small private companies to obtain a migration business license and unofficial organizations were not allowed to act as "windows".⁵⁷⁵ Nevertheless, at present it is perhaps still too soon to fairly evaluate these efforts to expand and regularize migration.

During the tenth five-year-plan period (2001-2005) the number of new dispatched labour migrants did not increase significantly, being 3,640 in 2001 and 4,727 in 2005. At the first sight this may seem good, but when compared with 1999 when the number of new migrants reached 4,527, the result is not so remarkable.⁵⁷⁶ When compared with other regions, Yanbian performed quite well, as in 2003, it dispatched 4,200 workers abroad. Compared with land-locked provinces - with the exception of Jilin - this was as much as, or even more, than the international labour export of each of these provinces.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁵ Li Zhonglin et al 2003, 130.

⁵⁷⁶ Yanbian touziwang 2006.

⁵⁷⁷ Yanbian touzi xinxiwang 2002; Zhongguo duiwai chengbao shanghui 2004b, 14. Although, the figures provided did not include Heilongjiang, which can be assumed to also be a major source of labour migrants to Russia.

Capital Transfers

New Social and Human Capital

During the early years of labour migration to South Korea, the non-economic gains of employment abroad were already highly valued among the officials. This positive attitude was associated with the general objective to improve the "quality" of the population. In that, the general expectation was that those people who worked abroad were able to widen their formerly limited views and acquire new skills, ideas and outlook. A mantra-like statement was that "through international labour migration, people can widen their field of vision and learn new managerial and technical skills". As one researcher put it:

*While Korean labourers cooperate and work together with foreigners, it is possible to learn for free many experiences about advanced techniques and managerial practices, ..., after their return, they can assess and popularize the advanced foreign techniques and managerial skills they have learned and use these to build up their country.*⁵⁷⁸

Early in 1993, even local newspaper articles on international labour migration reminded its readers that migration helps to train new talent and increase important new experiences.⁵⁷⁹

Indeed, all of the officials whom I interviewed emphasized the significance of the new skills and ideas which migrants can acquire abroad and return home with. One official informed me, that although many migrants work as ordinary labourers after return, they have still acquired more confidence and self-esteem from their new experiences and relatively high income, while abroad. This aspect was also included in the pre-migration training, which urged migrants to learn from their experiences and observations. He also emphasized that after return, workers can utilize their new skills and thus contribute to the economic development of their home village.⁵⁸⁰ The impact of migration experiences was considered especially important for the rural population. For example, one official acknowledged the liberation of

⁵⁷⁸ Jin Haiyan 1998, 84.

⁵⁷⁹ *Yanbian Ribao* 25 March 1993.

⁵⁸⁰ Interview 6, Yanbian 2004.

thought and outlook expansion aspects of migration for peasants. He explained that many peasants had improved their capabilities and now seek new ways to earn their living, as he commented:

*Economic and cultural exchange is very good. While the conditions for production in the countryside are relatively backward, first go abroad and work, first learn new skills, expand horizons and at the same time earn money. In this way, ..., the first goal is not to earn money.*⁵⁸¹

These changes also supported the central development goals of urbanization and diversification of rural economy. However, an inverse effect of human resource flow also occurred in the countryside, in that many villages became emptied of capable workers. The locals referred to this phenomenon as "five go, five remain": i.e. capable, wealthy, young, female and healthy people go, while ordinary, poor, old, male and sick people stay".⁵⁸²

Despite positive official context statements, some researchers complained that actually labour migrants seldom learned any new skills since they were usually employed as unskilled workers and in menial jobs. While researchers praised labour migration as a positive way to expand views, they were, at the same time sceptical about the actual likelihood to learn any new skills. Some writers even claimed that migrants were uninterested in gaining new vocational skills for work, but rather only "vacational" skills for their leisure time.⁵⁸³

Empirical evidence from different parts of the world has shown that the initial level of education and occupational skills are an important contributory factor for the acquisition of economic, social and human capital. Low-educated migrants are seldom able to acquire new skills just because they are employed as unskilled workers for physical labour, and receive no training for the work.⁵⁸⁴ For example, studies on migration to Europe have revealed that the

⁵⁸¹ Interview 14, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁸² Xie Zhaohua 1998, 57. This emptying of villages of Korean people of working age, and the influx of Han Chinese farmers who subsequently took over the farmland of those Korean emigrants, aroused concern among Chinese Korean researchers on the gradual erosion of the Korean language and culture in the Korean villages in Northeast China. See eg Zheng Xinzhe 1999.

⁵⁸³ Kim Dong-hwa et al 1996, 20-21, 130, 144-145; Jin Zhongguo 1994a, 250-251; Xie Zhaohua 1998, 58.

⁵⁸⁴ Ammassari & Black 2001, 28-29; Ghosh 1992, 436.

majority of migrant workers learnt little new, as they were engaged in unskilled works. On the contrary, there were even cases of deskilling of workers during migration.⁵⁸⁵

Thus, if the migrants do acquire new skills, what factors impact on their successful transfer? Bimal Ghosh, an expert in migration and development questions, has summarized the critical conditions required for return benefit into three points, viz: first, migrants should return with more advanced knowledge or higher skills than would have otherwise been acquired in the home country; secondly, any knowledge and skills gained, must be relevant and suitable for the local economy. Major reasons for the lack of skills transfer can arise from the poor infrastructure and a discouraging environment in the home region, and development gap between the sending and receiving region. Thirdly, the former migrant workers must have willingness and receive the opportunity, to use the newly acquired capital upon return.⁵⁸⁶ In sum, returnees must have new locally relevant skills which they can and desire to put into effective use.

Then, if new skills were acquired, were they transferable? A majority of the official Yanbianese labour migrants worked on ships, in knitting factories or on construction sites. Those who worked at construction sites abroad doing physical labour were probably unmotivated to take similar employment back in China, due to lower salary pay. Conversely, those who worked on ships were engaged in different kinds of tasks and likely learned a variety of new skills useful for machinery operation, or employment in restaurant or in sanitary services. As Yanbian hosted many South Korea invested textile factories, work in factories located in foreign countries may have provided some new skills useful in local labour markets after return. Alternatively, it is likely that the work provided for cheap labour force in the South Korean owned textile factories was similar to that in China, and therefore did not increase the skills level of the migrant. Migrants who worked in the service sector apparently did bring back new skills, which helped them to establish small enterprises. This can be seen in the expansion of the service sector in Yanbian. The migration generated

⁵⁸⁵ Ammassari & Black 2001, 27, 28; Paine 1974, cited in King 2000, 25.

⁵⁸⁶ Ghosh 2000, 186-187, 199-200.

consumption craze in Yanbian provided a fertile ground for this trend. Nevertheless, many return migrants still remained unemployed.⁵⁸⁷

The significance of human capital transfers is difficult to assess. It would appear that the transfer of new vocational skills mainly occurred in the service sector. Yet, the human capital in the form of new ideas, new ways to conduct and manage business and affairs, also helped to unleash the inventiveness of the returnees. (Examples of the new endeavours will be discussed in the sub-chapter on migrant entrepreneurship). This more diffuse type of human capital can be assessed as more important to the local development of Yanbian, than the straightforward vocational skills, but from the discrepancy between the economies of Yanbian and South Korea, the eventual new vocational skills were not so easily transferable to Yanbian.

The accumulation of such social capital which could be harnessed to enhance employment opportunities on return to Yanbian, probably remained small. For example, in China, some domestic return migrants have been able use their newly acquired social capital to establish sub-branches of their former employer's company in their home town. However, personally I was unable to uncover any information on this kind of practice in Yanbian. Rather, such new social capital enhanced the migrants' re-employment opportunities in South Korea instead.

Overall, because of their language and cultural skills, Yanbian Korean migrants were in a better position than Han Chinese to acquire new social capital while in South Korea. They were able to interact with their new society and create new social networks beyond their own migrant communities.

Remittances and Savings

In 1996, the total amount of remittances sent through regular channels was equal to the whole annual budget of the Yanbian prefecture.⁵⁸⁸ By 2003, migrant remittances totalled USD 653 million then double the local budget, and fifteen times higher than that year's value of realized

⁵⁸⁷ Interview 19, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁸⁸ Li Zhonglin et al 2003, 110

foreign investments.⁵⁸⁹ Since these figures did not include the savings which some people kept in South Korean banks,⁵⁹⁰ nor money brought back through unofficial channels or just in pockets, the financial gains of migration were in actuality far higher.

For what purposes did the migrants save money? Generally, the migrants' salaries were used for their family's needs, with top priority, the education of children. Many parents wanted to assure a good education for their children, and many desired to send their children to a university or abroad to study. This predilection with education is common for Chinese Koreans. The other common reason for working abroad was to improve living standards, thus, in common with all other migrant sending areas around the world, those migrants from Yanbian also constructed new houses which contrasted to the traditional mud and hay cottages or brick and tile houses built during the past decades. It was also common for rural migrants to buy an apartment in a nearby city⁵⁹¹ (see the photos on the next two pages). Incidentally, improved economy was also important in the marriage markets. Many single men wanted to boost their economy to improve their chances to meet a prospective wife. Eventually, because women increasingly sought husbands in South Korea, there became a serious shortage of women of the marriageable age in Yanbian.⁵⁹²

A large amount of the remittances and savings evidently went into consumption. Some sources claim that the consumption level in Yanbian was even higher than in Beijing and Shanghai.⁵⁹³ Local researchers complained this kind of consumption craze.⁵⁹⁴ However, buying, furnishing and equipping new homes, and using restaurant and leisure services, generated business and created further new work places. A demand for modern housing and the growing popularity of restaurants, karaoke bars and saunas also created a concomitant demand for construction firms, furniture shops, interior design, and home electronics retailers. The growing number of restaurants also provided new opportunities for peasants to diversify and expand their own production. Such new consumption patterns generated demand for a

⁵⁸⁹ Unofficial discussions in 2004 and 2005; *Xinhuaawang Jilin pindao* 29 June 2004. The amount of the remittances was probably calculated on the basis of the foreign remittances received by the local banks.

⁵⁹⁰ Interview 19, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁹¹ Interview 13, 14 and 19, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁹² Interview 14, Yanbian 2004; For example, in 1997, the number of marriages between Yanbianese women and foreign men was 3066. Of these marriages, 90 per cent was to South Korean men. Jiang 1999, 128.

⁵⁹³ *Xinhuaawang Jilin pindao* 2 September 2002.

⁵⁹⁴ Jin Zhongguo 2003, 7, 8.



New apartments on the river bank close to the city centre of Yanji, the capital of Yanbian. More buildings were under construction.



New houses under construction in rural areas of Longjin.



Old houses in the rural areas of Yanji and Longjing.

larger variety of consumer goods, and to cater for these, new shops and department stores were built, accelerating domestic and foreign trade. In such a manner, migrant money transferred from abroad spurred the economy and created new jobs, particularly in the construction industry and service sector. Moreover, these new companies generated substantial tax income for the government.⁵⁹⁵

This simple increase in incomes, and resultant expansion of the markets became an advantageous new trend, and one which was welcomed by the local level officials. One summed this up as:

"After earning some money, [migrants] return back with the earnings, after which, it is indeed very beneficial for the construction of the economy and various social projects for our home villages. So, the more people with earnings return, the better for our place. This improves the markets, and increases the consumption – it's all very beneficial".⁵⁹⁶

Research findings from other parts of the world reveal similar patterns. For example, Luis Guarnizo has paid attention to the knock-on effect of the consumption of migrant households, in that it has generated further demand for services and trade.⁵⁹⁷ Moreover, the major economic benefits of such remittances have not necessarily only benefited the migrant sending villages and towns, but also flowed beyond to regional urban centres which have better economic structures.⁵⁹⁸

At the prefecture level, officials only became interested in the remittances when they realized the significant sums these small remittances actually made in total every year. Although the living standard in Yanbian is higher than the provincial average, its overall economic performance still remains well below the average, for example, compared with other autonomous prefectures, its ranking had slipped from second place in 1990 to fifth by 1998.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁵ Jin Zhongguo 2003, 4; Du Yonghao 1998, 22.

⁵⁹⁶ Interview 19, Yanbian 2004.

⁵⁹⁷ Guarnizo 2003, 673; Taylor 1999, 70, 72.

⁵⁹⁸ Taylor 1999, 78.

⁵⁹⁹ Li Jixiong et al 2002, 47-48.

In an effort to improve the economy and restore the higher ranking of Yanbian, authorities viewed these remittances as a partial saviour.

The discussion about the utilization of remittances emerged at the beginning of the 2000s. Among the earliest documents which mention these remittances was a report compiled by the head of the Prefecture's Foreign Trade Bureau, in which it was noted that these were worth the equivalent one fifth of the prefecture's GDP. To channel this capital into practical use, he had two suggestions. Firstly, he proposed that special high interest bank accounts should be made available, in order to collect the migrants' savings into the banking system. Secondly, he made the suggestion that the reward-policies designed to encourage people to mediate investments to Yanbian, should also be directed toward migrants, so that migrants who thus lent their savings to companies, could be granted a reward.⁶⁰⁰ Another document noted that migrant remittances accounted for 15 per cent of rural income and that these funds should be utilized for the development of the rural economy.⁶⁰¹

In 2003, these ideas were formulated into a definitive policy initiative in a document entitled "Key tasks for the year 2003", issued by the prefecture government, which contained a proposal that migrant remittances and savings should be turned from "dead into active money" (*ba "si" qian bian "huo"*). The document called for measures which would channel migrant savings to both consumer markets and new industries, in order to encourage and fasten the development of new industries.⁶⁰² However, during my fieldwork trip to Yanbian, in 2004, I was unable to find out which government unit was responsible for the promotion of this proposal, and in what ways it was thought to be implemented. I was directed at different government units to enquire, which only led to a run around. Thus, despite such proposals on the injection of the remittances into new industries, at that time they remained widely undissemated and unimplemented.

The idea was, however, not lost, but rather the opposite. The utilization of remittances was incorporated in the policy of "Reinvigorating of the Old Industrial Basis of Northeast China" (*Zhenxing Dongbei laogongye jidi*). This was put forward at the 16th Party Congress in 2002,

⁶⁰⁰ Ding Rongtai 2001, 154.

⁶⁰¹ Wang Qingbin 2001, 22-23.

⁶⁰² Yanbianzhou renmin zhengfu 2003.

and the implementation began in 2003.⁶⁰³ It became also integrated into the policy of "human-centred development" (*yiren weiben*). In the document of the important tasks of this strategy during 2004, the policy of injecting private capital into new private enterprises was defined as one pillar of the Northeastern strategy.⁶⁰⁴ Further, the channelling of Yanbianese private capital into the northeast was also raised in a report compiled by the "Reinvigorate Northeast" leaders' small group.⁶⁰⁵

This state-sanctioned policy urged the Yanbianese leadership to launch initiatives in favour of private entrepreneurship. To collect funds for new undertakings, a proposal issued by the Yanbian *Zhengxie*, prompted the usage of the large private bank savings in Yanbian as company investments.⁶⁰⁶ In mid 2005, this policy was pushed forward in a speech by the Governor of the Prefecture, Jin Zhenji, when he stated that since the government had, by then conducted many studies on the issue, he now had a specific proposal to offer, viz: firstly, he urged that private savings should be collected and channelled into good projects, and secondly that the savers could lend their money to companies, assisted by the banks.⁶⁰⁷ As set out here, although these ideas were then not new, it was significant that they were now put forward by the Governor of the Prefecture.

However, my interviewees in government bureaus did not mention these initiatives, which possibly indicates that they still were at the initial stages. Yet, one local researcher informed me in 2004 about the suggestion to establish an investment centre where migrants could club together their savings and invest them in new enterprises. This researcher emphasized that as this was a new plan, it had to be studied thoroughly.⁶⁰⁸ This kind of scholarly but cautious approach, which seemed to be common amongst Koreans, partly explains the slow process for these new initiatives. I also heard about plans to launch re-integration policies, which included measures to encourage the returned migrants to use their savings wisely. In practical terms, these proposed re-integration activities would be arranged by a "reception office"

⁶⁰³ The policy was drafted during 2003, and in late 2003, a leaders' small group was established to coordinate and implement the plans. In 2004, the basic tasks of the strategy were issued. Zhanxing Dongbeiwang 2006.

⁶⁰⁴ Guowuyuan bangongting 2004.

⁶⁰⁵ Zhanxing Dongbeiwang 2004.

⁶⁰⁶ Zhou Zhengxie guanyu jinyibu tuijin quanmin chuanye de jianyan. Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xiashang huiyi Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizhou weiyuanhui 2004.

⁶⁰⁷ Jin Zhenji 2005c; "2005 nian Zhongyang yihao wenjian." Zhonggong gongyang guowuyuan 2004.

⁶⁰⁸ Interview 13, Yanbian 2004.

(*jiedaiban*) for prospective and returning migrants. This office, eventually affiliated to the Department of Commerce, would especially help migrants who returned home after several years abroad through assistance with re-integration, job location and advice on how to invest their savings.⁶⁰⁹ These kinds of ideas were also proposed by local researchers.⁶¹⁰

One local informant criticized the tardiness of the prefectural government, in that local officials were incapable of finding new practices and did not exercise any own initiative, but merely followed orders from above. He explained that in southern China, local governments helped in the collection and investment of foreign earnings in factories and local infrastructure, for which migrants then became shareholders and entitled to dividends. This kind of practice was still absent in Yanbian,⁶¹¹ although it was mentioned in speeches. Thus, from this example, the true reason for an alleged lack of injection of migrants' earnings into local economy may actually lay with the low "quality" (*suzhi*) of the officials, and not in that of the migrants.

Though, gradually the government became very keen on the infusion migrants' savings into the local economy – or at least so far as in political speeches. An advocate for the "new economics of labour migration" school, the economist Edward J. Taylor, reasons that the creation of a fertile ground for remittances to contribute to migrant sending areas, is the key to promoting development from migration. However, Taylor accepts that it is unrealistic to expect migrants to be competent in transferring savings into production. Therefore, he proposes special measures in order to collect savings from migrant households, and redirect their availability for local producers.⁶¹² This was precisely what the Yanbian government planned to do. However, economists seem to be confident with the rationality of the economy planners of migrant sending areas, and their commitment to sustainable development. There are no studies as yet, which have analyzed how remittances have actually been utilized in the hands of local development planners. Suspicion arises, that funds may have disappeared on futile construction projects, or to corruption, and that the development projects based on remittances have only benefited the traditional elite while overlooking the needs of migrant

⁶⁰⁹ Interview 19, Yanbian 2004.

⁶¹⁰ Li Zhonglin et al 2003, 121.

⁶¹¹ Interview 1, Yanbian 2005.

⁶¹² Taylor 1999, 74

households. Since Yanbian has been unable to demonstrate good performance in the management of its local economy, it is open to question whether local authorities would be the most competent to decide on how to spend migrants' savings.

Nevertheless, the local banks were eager to collect such remittances into their vaults, so that in the early years of the 21st century, there was fierce competition between the local banks for these migrant remittances, which gave migrants many effective channels to choose from. Walls and street side advertisement boards, as well as the sides of the busses were full of advertisements all providing quick and cheap international transfers of money when I visited Yanji in 2004 (see the two photos on the next page). The existence of reliable and cheap channels for remittances has been perceived as important for the successful transfer of migrants' capital, as in the absence of such channels, migrants have to rely on unofficial, therefore often unreliable, agents or organize their savings themselves.⁶¹³

The benefits of migrant-remittances for the local economy, can be assessed differently depending on the view point: if the migrants' savings are seen only as potential investments for productive activities, therein importance may remain minor. Yet, from a wider aspect their cumulative effects can bring a more positive appraisal, for with a more nuanced approach, the importance of the remittances is clearly significant. Firstly, the consumption of the newly acquired financial capital spurred the local economy and created new working places not only in the home villages and towns of the migrant households, but also in the whole region, particularly in the urban areas. Secondly, some of the savings were invested in local companies which supported the expansion of the entrepreneurial activities in Yanbian. Thirdly, some migrants who returned to the rural areas used their savings to diversify their agricultural income sources while some others invested their savings into new endeavours in towns and cities. These activities are examined in the next section.

⁶¹³ Ghosh 1992, 427-428.



Banks advertising swift and secure international money transfers and professional service in Yanji.

Migrant Entrepreneurship and Returnees

The term "return migrant" generally refers to those people who return to their place of origin after a significant period in another region.⁶¹⁴ Here, it is important to distinguish between those migrants who return for a shorter visit, and those who intend to settle for a longer period of time. The presumption is that the impact of those who return for a longer time is stronger and more durable than compared with temporary visitors. Because of cyclical nature of current-day migration, eventual re-migration cannot be ruled out here. Nevertheless, migrant entrepreneurship can still benefit the home regions even if migrants do not return for a longer period of time. As Luis Guarnizo maintains, business formation is part of transnational migrants' practices; not only returnees but those who reside abroad may also set up enterprises in the home country.⁶¹⁵

Overall, the local economic, social and political conditions in the sending country have been raised as the main determinant for a successful migrant capital transfer. An absence of suitable arrangements to support returnees financially, technically or with bureaucracy, or a stimulating environment will prevent the successful integration of return migrants everywhere.⁶¹⁶

The role of financial capital acquired by migrants has normally been emphasized in the conventional literature on migration benefit. However, recent research findings show that social and human capital might be even more important than financial capital for business formation on return. In Ma Zhongdong's large quantitative survey on the impact of domestic return migration on local development in China, one of the main findings was that acquired skills and abilities are far more important than savings. In fact, since migrants' salaries tended to be so low, their savings seldom provided a basis to establish business.⁶¹⁷ With capital deficiency being the major hindrance to establish business in rural China, Ma maintains that migrants' human-capital accumulation during labour migration enhances the mobilization of local networks when back home. This in turn, helps to compensate for the lack of capital and

⁶¹⁴ King 2000, 8.

⁶¹⁵ Guarnizo 2003, 676, 681.

⁶¹⁶ Ghosh 2000, 186, 199-200

⁶¹⁷ Ma 2001, 251, 252.

thus supports migrant entrepreneurship and investment decisions.⁶¹⁸ Further, his study also revealed that compared with non-migrants, migrants are more qualified as investors.⁶¹⁹ The study also highlighted the particular features of female returnees, e.g. despite women having traditionally an inferior position in the household economy, a considerable proportion of female returnees had changed their occupation and become small businesswomen, specialized farmers or factory workers.⁶²⁰ What was the situation in Yanbian?

Chinese Koreans have been compared with the inhabitants of Wenzhou,⁶²¹ which is a Chinese coastal city that has become wealthy, partly through entrepreneurial migrants. However, although migration from Wenzhou and Yanbian may be comparable in proportion to local populations, Chinese Koreans can not be compared with Wenzhou-residents with regard to the spirit of entrepreneurship. Although many companies are established by the Yanbianese return migrants, the scale of them is relatively small and the majority operate in the service sector. One possible reason for this discrepancy may be that Chinese Korean Confucian traditions tend to neglect trade over career in more respected bureaucracy and arts. Another important factor for the relatively low number of migrant entrepreneurs there, is the discouraging environment: decision-makers in Northeast China still pay heed to the state-owned industrial sector, and the local economic infrastructure is weak. Nevertheless, it is still possible to discern changes in both the attitude towards business among Chinese Koreans⁶²², and in the local economic environment facing migrants.

In Yanbian, return migrants were first of all prone to put their savings in housing, education, and consumption, after which, they generally had no money left for so called "productive economic activities". Many returnees did establish restaurants, karaoke bars or hair dressing salons as this did not necessarily require large investments, but conversely very few

⁶¹⁸ Ma 2002, 1780, 1981.

⁶¹⁹ Ma 1999, 75.

⁶²⁰ Ma 2001, 249.

⁶²¹ *Xinhua* *Jilin pindao* 2 September 2002.

⁶²² Si Joong Kim has discerned two generations of Chinese Korean entrepreneurs. The first generation consists of peasants who in the 1980s set up TVE's. Their attempts to grasp the opportunities of South Korea failed in 1990s due to the lack of skills. The entrepreneurs of second generation which emerged during the 1990s are more educated and have travelled in foreign countries thus possessing more skills and networks. They have been successful in trading, IT, and construction industry. However, their businesses remain local. Kim 2003, 119.

established a larger business or invested in production.⁶²³ In 2004, one official noticed that these migrants who returned for the first time, after a period abroad of about three years, tended to invest their earnings in the education of their children and in the improvement of their living conditions, whereas those, who returned from a second term of foreign employment, were more likely to use their earnings in a more productive way – for example, the purchase of a car to become a taxi driver, or buy more cows. Still, the number of the new entrepreneurs remained low. Nevertheless, this official believed that a change was taking place, but as yet, it was not so clear.⁶²⁴

Encouragingly, there are some positive examples of successful migrant entrepreneurship among Chinese Koreans. Firstly, one informant noted that in the vicinity of urban centres, returning peasant migrants have found suitable opportunities to establish small enterprises and engage in non-agricultural undertakings.⁶²⁵ This is well illustrated by one exemplary village close, to the prefecture capital Yanji, which had sent some one hundred migrants abroad of which nearly half of the returnees have become entrepreneurs. New companies in this village were mainly restaurants, but also included the transportation business, processing industry and wood processing.⁶²⁶ For example, in Yanji, one of the most successful returnees was one man who had worked as a sailor for ten years, who, on return, established a lucrative sand quarry which provided sand and gravel for the booming construction industry.⁶²⁷ Another high profile success was a hotel built by another returnee on the bank of the river in central Yanji (see the photo on the next page). Admittedly, these examples are exceptions, but nevertheless, they clearly indicate the potential for migrant entrepreneurship in Yanbian, even beyond the service sector.

⁶²³ Interview 4, Yanbian 1996; Interview 13 and 19, Yanbian 2004.

⁶²⁴ Interview 14, Yanbian 2004.

⁶²⁵ Interview 14, Yanbian 2004.

⁶²⁶ Interview 22, Yanbian 2004.

⁶²⁷ Jin Zhongguo 2003, 4.



Established by a successful returnee, a hotel situated on the river bank close to the Yanji city centre.

Yanbianese newspaper articles also reiterated the potential embedded in return migrants. For example, a report on labour migration to Saipan stated that many factory owners on Saipan are former workers. The reporters held high hopes for the migrants:

"Many bosses on Saipan are former Chinese migrant workers who today are entrepreneurs, which indicates that some of our entrepreneurs are now growing up from this migrant stock."⁶²⁸

⁶²⁸ Yanbian Ribao 25 March 1993.

In a research report compiled in 2003, the former leading cadre, Jin Zhongguo, stressed that returnees should be given an important role in developing the economy and society. This report had circulated around local government bureaus. He proposed three ideas on the development of migrant entrepreneurship, viz: first, local government should train and guide returnees to commence business. Secondly, to support this goal, he further suggested that the local media should advise returnees on successful models and negative experiences. He also proposed that the local government should set up a structure for investment cooperation, which could lead and organize returnees to pool their funds and start up joint-stock enterprises. For this, he emphasized the role of popular associations to generate ideas and help coordinate new economic activities. Finally, he stated that the government should provide returnee entrepreneurs with similar preferential policies as foreign investors received.⁶²⁹

The Reinvigoration of the Northeast strategy came to the support of these new local ideas, in that it called for the promotion of private entrepreneurship in order to create new employment opportunities. The Yanbian Department of Labour and Social Security took the first step in this direction when, in 2004, it initiated a training programme for returnees who wished to start new undertakings. In this programme, the returnees were offered a choice of suggested projects, proposed by the local authorities. The classes included project planning which were later evaluated by experts. This training was expected to create a solid basis for new projects.⁶³⁰ The promotion of entrepreneurship in Yanbian was also one of the Employment Office's major tasks assigned for the year 2004.⁶³¹

This training programme seems as a watershed in local migration related practices, as return migrants are considered capable of managing projects and have been offered an active role in the local economy. Notably though, the projects which they embarked upon, were not their own, but were handed to them by the officials. Although an innovative and important initiative, presumably it was not widely disseminated in Yanbian, as when asked about initiatives to inject the migrants' savings and skills into the local economy, my contacts at the Employment Office, the Department of Labour and Social Security and in the Department of

⁶²⁹ Jin Zhongguo 2003, 8-9

⁶³⁰ Zhongguo laodongli shichang 2004 and 2005a.

⁶³¹ Yanbian jiuye jianbao 2004a.

Commerce failed to mention this project. If this type of training course does successfully transform return migrants into entrepreneurs or project managers, it will add to the arguments against the usual claims that migrants are of low "quality" and incapable of pursuing more advanced economic activities.

Another campaign also launched by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security underpinned migrant entrepreneurship. The "Spring breeze activities" (*chunfeng xingdong*) were initiated in 2005, in order to help domestic rural-urban migrants to find employment in cities.⁶³² In 2006, one of the six campaign activities in Yanbian was aimed to guide the migrants to undertake new projects, and was directed both toward domestic and international migrants. In a document disseminating this campaign, international return migrants were held up as exemplary cases of successful returnees.⁶³³

The development of migrant entrepreneurship may also gain additional support in a change of the status of small and medium sized companies and the service sector in local development plans. A document prepared by the *Zhengxie* in 2004, emphasized the expansion of the service sector, and especially new fields such as consultation, transportation and judicial services, i.e. business-to-business services, which were regarded as important to support the development of the market economy.⁶³⁴ The Governor of the Prefecture, Jin Zhenji, developed this policy further in early 2005, in a speech at a meeting of the Committee of the Communist Party. He pushed for the creation of a new entrepreneurial culture which could enhance the development of private companies. He also raised the important issue of supportive policies and assistance for the entrepreneurs. He even went so far as to suggest that the nurturing of new projects supported by private capital should become a matter attached to the cadre responsibility system, and the relevant leaders at prefecture, county and city levels should take responsibility for the proper management and successful implementation of one to two significant projects.⁶³⁵ To promote this drive, a month later the prefecture arranged a seminar on private entrepreneurship, at which Governor Jin gave a speech, in which he particularly elevated return migrants as potential sources of new capital for small and

⁶³² Laodong he shehui baozhangbu 2006.

⁶³³ Yanbian zhouwei baochi gongchandangyuan xianjinxing jiaoyu huodong lingdao xiaozu bangongshi 2005.

⁶³⁴ Zhou Zhengxie guanyu jinyibu tuijin quanmin chuanye de jianyan. Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xiashang huiyi Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizhou weiyuanhui 2004.

⁶³⁵ Jin Zhenji 2005a.

medium-sized companies,⁶³⁶ although it is notable that migrants were not portrayed as entrepreneurs, but rather as sources of capital.

However, when in 2004 I asked local researchers about the probability that the number of return migrant entrepreneurs would be included in the targets of the cadre responsibility system, the reply was negative. Indeed, they found this idea amusing since it seemed so improbable.⁶³⁷ Nevertheless, possibly a triggering change toward this direction is perhaps occurring, for in 2005, the prefectural Governor did attach support for entrepreneurship to the responsibility system and further, the Employment Office had also included in its annual work plans support for the return migrants' self-employment.

This then, was one step away from the attitude that prevailed during the heydays of the Tumen river programme, when industry and infrastructure development had dominated the economic development strategies. Although still certainly most emphasized, now small and medium-sized companies and service sector were also elevated to an important position in the plans, and returnee migrants' capital as a fuel for economic development now became appreciated. However, the migrants themselves, with their new human and social capital, were still not regarded as a force to reinvigorate local business activities. Even the initiative of the Employment Office to train return migrants in business and project management was only launched initially to reduce unemployment, development of local business was just a useful side-effect.

The proportion of women among returnee entrepreneurs was high, and the general understanding was that, as opposed to men, they were more prone to establish small companies,⁶³⁸ such as restaurants, coffee bars, karaoke halls, beauty parlours and small fashion shops. For example in 1997, in the city of Yanji 60 to 70 per cent of the private industrial or commercial units were run by women, of which 40 percent were engaged in the service sector, and 25 per cent were industrial enterprises. Over two thirds of these companies

⁶³⁶ Jin Zhenji 2005b.

⁶³⁷ Interview 15, Yanbian 2004.

⁶³⁸ Interview 13, Yanbian 2004.

were set up in 1996 or 1997,⁶³⁹ and the labour migration experience presumably gave an impetus to the establishment of many of these companies.

From this development, there would be reasons to develop specific policies toward female returnees, yet being aware of the lack of interest officials have shown towards return migrants, it is perhaps not surprising that I have not found evidence of local policies particularly directed toward female returnees. However, there might be special arrangements, e.g. the Women's Federation, in cooperation with the Employment Office (*jiuyeju*), established a specific Women's Employment Agency (*Funü jiuye chuangkou*). Inter alia, it operates as a labour export intermediary and also arranges training for female entrepreneurs, although in the articles which publicized this new Agency, these two functions were not linked together, in that it did not just train specifically return migrants, but all female entrepreneurs.⁶⁴⁰

As of this writing, there are no larger local level studies on the development impact of international migration in China, thus it is difficult to make comparisons at this level with other parts of China. Nevertheless, some researchers do acknowledge similarities between domestic and international migration in China,⁶⁴¹ and as such, I suggest it is acceptable to compare the impact of Yanbian's international return migrants with that of domestic return migrants.⁶⁴²

The sending areas of domestic labour migrants have planned and implemented various schemes to inject the new capital acquired by migrants into the local economy. Rachel Murphy's study on the impact of migration into rural areas of Jiangxi, revealed a variety of preferential policies and publicity campaigns aimed to encourage successful migrants to return and set up companies. For example, one township had established a development zone

⁶³⁹ Lin Jinshu et al 1999, 113.

⁶⁴⁰ Zhongguo laodongli shichang 2005b.

⁶⁴¹ Income differentials in China between coastal and inland areas, correspond with those between developing and developed countries. Moreover, because of China's two tiered social system which excludes rural migrants from the social services of cities, Chinese rural-urban migrants have been in a similar discriminated position as international migrants. A third similarity is the geographical distance between sending and receiving localities. Solinger 1995, 113-139.; Kenneth D. Roberts has treated China's domestic migration as comparable with Mexico-U.S. migration. Roberts 1997.

⁶⁴² Yanbian also had numerous domestic return migrants who had established enterprises. Yet, in reports and in research they have been left in the shadow of international return migrants. Further, Zheng Yushan estimates that one fifth of all Korean return migrants in Northeast China have set up a company. Zheng Yushan 2000.

for returnee business creation. Preferential policies additionally included temporary tax reductions and assistance with access to land, credit and electricity, and also confirmed the importance of local government in the injection of migration benefits. Overall, her research provides examples of the successful incorporation of returnees into local development by the local government.⁶⁴³ A study by Gong Weibin, on rural migration from Anhui, also highlights similar activities. In one of his fieldwork counties, support for migrant entrepreneurship was even regarded equally important as the proper implementation of the one-child policy, which itself is of the highest concern for local level cadres.⁶⁴⁴ However, studies by Murphy and Ma Zhongdong give the impression that, despite the rosy promises of local government, in China excessive claims by local bureaucrats had complicated and hindered the migrants' business formation.⁶⁴⁵ Thus, although local government seems to be the key for successful capital transfers, the modelling of viable programmes still requires the will, time, knowledge and altruism from the local authorities.

Other areas outside Yanbian have formulated more advanced policies to inject migrant capital into their own villages and cities. Local officials were aware of some advanced practices in other parts of China, but a more effective compilation and dissemination of the best ones would help local governments to draft policies without a need to effect them through trial and error. Nevertheless, in the end, unless sanctioned from above, it is in the hands of the local government to decide on implementation. In the case of Yanbian, it would seem that these new policies had to be enforced from above, before they were launched.

Ethnically-based Labour Export in the Service of Local Economic Development

Transnational ethnic relationships provided Yanbian Koreans with a valuable avenue for labour migration. Compared with the transnational connections of the Han Chinese international migrant workers, the Korean ties proved even wider and more useful, as the common ethnic background, culture and language opened employment doors throughout the whole country. Han Chinese migrants who travelled abroad through the help of family ties

⁶⁴³ Murphy 2002, 136-141.

⁶⁴⁴ Gong Weibin 1998, 231-233.

⁶⁴⁵ Murphy 2002, 180-182; Ma 2002, 1782.

were more often than not, confined to those job opportunities which were available through their contacts, and in a country where they constituted a minority. Thus, they were likely only able to find work within a small ethnic niche, which their kin and co-ethnics had carved out in the host country.

Through Ethnic Channels to South Korea and Beyond

Labour export from Yanbian has expanded thanks to the ethnic composition of the local labour force. Many Yanbian Koreans have been able to acquire a work visa for South Korea along with the invitation letter required of their South Korean - real or invented - relatives. Compared with the Han Chinese, Chinese Koreans possess language skills and a knowledge of Korean cultural norms which have given them with an advantage over the South Korean labour markets.⁶⁴⁶ Further, through their shared same culture, they were also able to carve out a niche in the labour markets in the production of Korean-style foodstuffs and in the service sector, too, particularly household services.⁶⁴⁷ Interpersonal contacts provided many and wide connections which gave an opening to Chinese Koreans for information on the South Korean labour markets.⁶⁴⁸ Further, ties to those South Koreans who had lived in Yanbian during the Japanese occupation (1931-1945), were regarded as important to create new channels for labour export.⁶⁴⁹

Chinese Korean workers were not only sent to South Korea, but they were also employed by South Korean companies in other countries, where those companies had operations. Thus, many of the Yanbianese who worked in Spain as fishermen or as construction workers in Russia were initially recruited by South Korea companies. Those Yanbianese who found their way to Libya, worked at the construction sites of Hyundai, one of the largest South Korean business conglomerates.⁶⁵⁰ Since 1992, the Saipan Island, one of the Northern Mariana Islands east of the Philippine Sea, has become an especially attractive target for official labour export. There several South Korean companies produced clothing with the label "Made in the USA", although under less strict labour standards than in the continental USA. These

⁶⁴⁶ Jin Dong et al 1996, 56; Xuan Longnan 1992, 87; Interview 6, Yanbian 2004.

⁶⁴⁷ Xinhua wang Jilin pindao 14 December 2004.

⁶⁴⁸ Shen Wangen 2002b, 1.

⁶⁴⁹ Xuan Longnan 1992, 86.

⁶⁵⁰ Piao Chengxian 2001, 91, 93; Li Haiyu 2004, 31.

companies employed many Yanbianese Korean speaking workers. However, Yanbian had also sent some Han Chinese and members of other nationalities there, too.⁶⁵¹ When comparing the destinations of the workers, the South Korean influence is significant, although South Korea has been the target of only, on average, 30 per cent of the officially-dispatched workers. Nevertheless, if the ratios for workers sent to clearly South Korea related targets, e.g. Saipan, Libya, and the seafaring industry are totalled, the proportion climbs as high as 75 per cent.⁶⁵² The South Korean work-sites outside of South Korea proper were, politically, rather an appropriate alternative for the Yanbian trade administration. In these places, the impact of South Korean influence on the ethnic and national identity of Yanbian Koreans was presumably weaker since they were not exposed to South Korean society and culture. As such, it is plausible that local government had expanded these channels because of their lesser sensitivity.

Thus, ethnic ties not only enhanced employment opportunities in the kin-state, but also in other parts of the world, wherever companies of the kin-state were also active. Such ethnic ties gave a substantial boost to the local efforts to send a work force abroad. On their own, Yanbianese companies would have had limited resources to conclude labour-contract bids in the global markets, but in cooperation with South Korean business corporations, they reached another plane of magnitude and were able to take advantage of the global presence and brand name of their powerful partners.⁶⁵³

A specific ethnic avenue for Yanbian Korean workers opened up as South and North Korea initiated business cooperation. However, this kind of triangular cooperation was possibly less significant due to the lack of cheap suitable personnel in North Korea, but in any case, North Korea wanted to restrict direct contacts between its nationals and the South Koreans, and thus Yanbian Koreans were regarded as a neutral option here.⁶⁵⁴ Chinese Koreans have worked on construction sites in different parts of North Korea, and as service personnel in South Korean invested projects in the Rajin-Songbon development zone. When the South Korean Hyundai Asan began a tourism development project in the North Korean Mount Gungang, Chinese

⁶⁵¹ Interview 6, Yanbian 2004; Li Bin 1999, 276.

⁶⁵² Based on tables in Li Haiyu 2004, 24.

⁶⁵³ Li Haiyu 2004, 32.

⁶⁵⁴ Interview 21, Yanbian 2004.

Koreans were again employed there, mainly as taxi drivers.⁶⁵⁵ By the year 2001, around one thousand Yanbian Koreans had been sent to North Korea through official channels to work for South Korean companies,⁶⁵⁶ an avenue that provided temporary relief in the shortfall of labour-export channels. However, if North Korea is to open its doors for wider cooperation and allow its citizens to meet South Koreans, this channel for labour export will dwindle as the Yanbian Koreans become replaced by locals.

A somewhat late discovery was the opportunity afforded by those South Korean companies that operated in China. Once South Korean enterprises had established themselves in China, Yanbian Korean workers independently sought employment in these companies, but it was only in 2004 that the local Employment Office actively began to extend its reach into the South Korean companies within China. It established a brand mark for its labour force, relying on its koreanness. This campaign was aimed at the South Korean companies that operated in different parts of China. Another strategy which was under preparation in 2004 was to set up labour- service bases in six coastal cities where there were many South Korean companies.⁶⁵⁷

During the Asian financial crisis, the need to expand channels even outside the ethnic Korean sphere became evident. Demand for cheap foreign labour force slumped and as the value of the Korean currency halved in comparison to the US dollar, the salaries of the migrants shrank. In this situation, for example the prefectural forestry department began cooperation with Russia and recruited 500 workers for the logging industry.⁶⁵⁸

The sheer expansion of Korean migration can be seen as a contributing factor to the overseas employment of the Yanbianese Han Chinese. Labour migration to South Korea as a meaningful way to find employment and raise living standards, was found among all ethnic groups in Yanbian. In addition to regular migration channels, some Han Chinese migrants were able to find work abroad with the help of their Korean friends.⁶⁵⁹ In this way, ethnic Korean migration channels expanded across ethnic boundaries. Members of other ethnic

⁶⁵⁵ Piao Chengxian 2001, 91, 92; Interview 13, Yanbian 2004.

⁶⁵⁶ Piao Chengxian 2001, 94.

⁶⁵⁷ *Yanbian jiuye jianbao* 2004a, b and c.

⁶⁵⁸ *Yanbian Ribao* 13 March 1998.

⁶⁵⁹ Interview 1, Yanbian 2005; Wang Tiezhi & Li Hongjie 1997, 25.

groups than Koreans were also able to benefit directly from the Korean ethnic transnational ties. Cooperation with Russia in the fields of logging, agriculture and construction⁶⁶⁰ proved to be employment opportunities where the Han Chinese were not disadvantaged as compared with the Koreans.

However, having the same ethnic background did not necessarily create totally benevolent cooperation. The interactions between the Koreans from different countries varied from charity to grave abuse. The migration fever which spread among the Chinese Korean community in the early 1990s created the grounds for fraudulent migration brokers. In 1995 and 1996, South Korean brokers swindled more than 10,000 Koreans in Northeast China. The migration scholar, Xiang Biao, has used the term "network failure"⁶⁶¹ to explain why in many cases the Chinese network-based migration had turned into brutal exploitation. Drawing on a comparison between Indian and Chinese migration patterns, he surmised that in China, the lack of penetration by migrants' personal networks into the migration process made the migrants vulnerable to exploitation. Albeit exploitive, the human smuggler networks kept themselves separate from, normal social networks, whereas, in the Indian case, migrants' personal networks acted as a counterforce of specialist agents, creating a relatively orderly migration system.⁶⁶² Such network failure was evident in Yanbian. Those Koreans who were unable to find work in South Korea with the help of friends or relatives, became dependant on brokers with whom they had no established trusting relationship, and as a consequence, were easily susceptible to deception. A common ethnic background did not protect the migrants from fraud and exploitation.

In South Korea, the abuse of Chinese Korean migrant workers was commonplace. Due to their Korean background, they had expected to receive preferential treatment from employers and governmental bodies, even if employed without proper documentation. However, against their expectations, they were treated in a similar way to other immigrants, e.g. overdue wages were common and cases of violence, including sexual abuse of female workers, were not unknown. One Chinese Korean migrant noted in a newspaper interview, bitterly, that South

⁶⁶⁰ *Yanbian Ribao* 12 April 1997.

⁶⁶¹ The terms negative or sour capital could also be appropriate here.

⁶⁶² Xiang 2004.

Korean employers "prefer Chinese Korean who speak Korean to other immigrants just because it is easy to chivy them to work harder".⁶⁶³

Conversely though, the Yanbian Korean migrant workers sometimes compromised themselves by demanding special treatment, e.g. some Yanbian Koreans even asked for privileges as compensation for the atrocities they had suffered during the periods of radical politics in China.⁶⁶⁴ Further, Yanbian Korean trainees could become a burden, as many of them quit their jobs as better-paid jobs were available for Korean-speakers in the unofficial labour markets. In these ways, the Korean social capital turned sour, even from the viewpoint of the employers.

Reflections with Xinjiang and Yunnan

It is plausible to speculate, that all of China's ethnic minorities are somehow linked to global ethnic networks to some degree. Due to the processes of globalization and increased cross-border mobility, people from all of China's ethnic groups have in all likelihood dispersed to neighbouring countries and even beyond. Nevertheless, to transform into a force for development, there has to be a large enough pool of transnational ethnic contacts abroad and, preferably those in a developed country. A mere handful of relatives in a poor neighbouring country does not necessarily provide a solid foundation for the launching of official labour export.

In Yunnan, the irregular ethnic minority labour migration and human trafficking are extensive both to and from the province, yet, regular labour export does not seem to draw on the labour force's advantage of linguistic and cultural closeness with the target countries. According to a report on migration from the area, most migrants find their way to Thailand either with the help of migration brokers or Burmese relatives. Further, many Chinese-Tai from Xishuangpanna work in the Chiang Mai region in northern Thailand, where they have easily found work due to sharing a similar dialect and customs. These cultural factors enable them blend in with the locals and thus makes it easier for them to work there without proper

⁶⁶³ *The Korea Times* 31 October 2001.

⁶⁶⁴ Lee 2000c, 125; Unofficial discussions, Beijing 1996.

documentation. There, the Chinese-Tai usually work in factories, or the service industry. Married female migrants work as house servants or gardeners.⁶⁶⁵ Unfortunately, I have been unable to find information on the involvement of the local government of Xishuangpanna in ethnically-based regular labour export to Thailand.

Further, another possible ethnic network for labour export from Yunnan, and also from other provinces, might also be provided by the global Hui-muslim community, as in China at least, they have a profile of a business-oriented trader-minority, and then, the Hui-networks could be anticipated to provide a channel for labour export.

Yunnan is actively expanding its labour export to the Mekong River Sub-region, which is a hot spot for large infrastructure projects.⁶⁶⁶ Nevertheless, there appears not to be much interest for ethnically-based international labour export. An article on Yunnan's labour export, written by an official of the local Department of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, did not touch upon the advantages of ethnic minorities in international labour export.⁶⁶⁷ Another article written by staff members of a Yunnanese company engaged in labour export also failed to mention ethnic cross-border ties.⁶⁶⁸ Neither did a search on the website of the Government of Yunnan produce any documents which would have closely related ethnic minorities to international labour export. The regular labour export from Yunnan to neighbouring countries does not seem to draw on ethnic commonalities. A report on the site on Simao and Xishuangpanna, noted that ethnic minorities form 90 per cent of the overseas Chinese compatriots of Yunnan and that overseas Chinese contacts have been an important source of labour export contracts. Significantly, the document did not, however, specifically refer to local ethnic minorities as an asset in the arrangement of labour export cooperation.⁶⁶⁹ Labour export seemed to be linked with ethnic minorities only in the context of domestic labour export as a measure of poverty alleviation. In Yunnan, as part of the attempts to reduce unemployment and maintain social stability, ethnic minorities were given jobs in Chinese

⁶⁶⁵ Asian Migrant Centre and Mekong Migration Network 2002, 94; A related issue not considered here is the trafficking of women and children to the Thai sex industry.

⁶⁶⁶ The establishment of a China-ASEAN Free Trade Area will further integrate Yunnan with the continental Southeast Asia.

⁶⁶⁷ Ceng Xiaogang 1996, 8-9.

⁶⁶⁸ Yan Liankun & Xu Naixiang 1995.

⁶⁶⁹ Yunnansheng renda changweihui waishi huaqiao gongzuo weiyuanhui 2004.

cities while surplus Han Chinese workers were also channelled to the Mekong River sub-region.

The demand for a low-skilled Korean speaking labour force in South Korea enabled the emergence of regular ethnically-based labour export from Yanbian to South Korea companies. In Thailand, the demand for cheap labour has been met mainly with labour migration from Burma, Laos and Cambodia, and there has probably not been a similar call for linguistically and culturally homogenous foreign labour force as there was in South Korea.

As for Xinjiang, Saudi Arabia especially, as a popular target for Muslim labour migrants from Southeast and South Asian countries, could prove to be a vibrant cooperation partner for labour export agencies in Xinjiang. Indeed, contrary to my expectations, Xinjiang, where authorities fear the spread of extreme religious and nationalistic ideas from abroad, has also initiated ethnically-based labour export cooperation with Saudi Arabia. For example, in 2004 Xinjiang sent some 1,000 workers with ethnic minority background there, and for the year 2005, the region expected to raise the number of international migrant workers to 3,000.⁶⁷⁰

When compared to Xinjiang, the recognition of the Chinese Koreans as a loyal nationality has made it easier for Yanbian to promote ethnically-based labour export. Further, the chance to channel the Korean labour force into South Korean companies outside of ethnic Korean soil made labour export less sensitive politically. The demand for a Korean-language labour force provided ethnic Koreans with a privileged position in the labour export markets, one which the Yunnanese ethnic minorities did not have in their neighbouring countries.

Issues of Ethnic and National Identity and Religion

Close interaction between Chinese Korean migrants and South Koreans raised serious concerns among local authorities, that the ethnic and national identity of Chinese Koreans could shift towards South Korea. In Yanbian, the South Koreanization of the local culture was clear and the more developed and modern South Korea posed an attractive object of identification for the Yanbian Koreans. Distinct from Han Chinese labour migration, the

⁶⁷⁰ *Wulumuqi wanbao* 6 April 2005.

issues of national identity and border security were an inseparable aspect of the Chinese Korean labour export.

As previously explained, the political sensitiveness of labour export was reflected in the political and ideological training of the prospective migrants, and in the efforts to enforce discipline among them. Further, other, more general measures were also taken to tie the ethnic national identity of Chinese Koreans to China. For example, the National Commission on Ethnic Affairs funded a Yanbianese research programme in 1998 on the typical characteristics of Chinese Koreans. In 2002, to counteract claims by South Korean nationalists that Yanbian should be part of a Greater Korea, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences launched a "Northeast project" to prove that the historical kingdom of Goguryeo was a Chinese, and not a Korean, state. Also the historical Jiandao/Gando issue came under question. The two countries entered into a political dispute over history, both claiming jurisdiction over the Goguryeo Kingdom. The forums for these battles were amongst others academic journals and seminars, the world heritage list administered by UNESCO, and historical exhibitions.⁶⁷¹

However, the interactions between Chinese Koreans and South Koreans also worked in China's favour. For example, as a consequence of discrimination and low social status in South Korea, many Chinese Korean migrants became comfortable once again with China.⁶⁷² The South Korean sociologist Hyun Ok Park, who has interviewed Chinese Korean migrants, has reported, that many Chinese Koreans felt that the discrimination they suffered from their South Korean ethnic kin was one of their most humiliating experiences, which troubled them more than any harsh work or unpaid wages.⁶⁷³ In this situation, rather than a desire to identify themselves with South Korea, they preferred emphasize their ties to China.⁶⁷⁴ In China, they could feel pride at the rise achieved in their living standards and also proud to be Chinese

⁶⁷¹ See eg *People's Daily Online* 2 July 2004, China's ancient Goguryeo Kingdom site added to World Heritage List; The Korean Overseas Information Service (2005). Goguryeo (Koguryo) in Korean History; The exhibition "Kunst aus dem Alten Korea: Historische Abbilder von Wandmalereien aus Gräbern des Goguryeo-Reiches" was organized in Berlin, Germany in 2005 with the support of the Korea Foundation. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin 2005. Illuminating academic contributions to the dispute: Song Ki-ho (2004). China's Attempt at "Stealing" Parts of Ancient Korean History. *The Review of Korean Studies* 7:4; Liu Zimin (2002). Gaogulizu yuan yanjiu. *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 5.

⁶⁷² Bernard Vincent Olivier has detected similar patterns in the interaction between Yanbian Koreans and North Koreans in the 1960s. Also then, close interactions first generated euphoria but later resulted in strengthening the chineseness of Yanbian Koreans. Olivier 2001.

⁶⁷³ Park 2005, 28.

⁶⁷⁴ Yanbianzhou Minwei 1997, 24-25; Interview 3, Yanbian 1999.

Korean nationality. Chinese researchers also sometimes pointed out that with the improvement of China's economy, migrants had become more interested to return to, and regard China as their home country.⁶⁷⁵

Further, the immigration policies of South Korea made also the Chinese Koreans feel rejected. The official South Korean standpoint on Chinese Korean labour migrants neglected them. For example, Chinese Koreans were excluded from the Act on Overseas Ethnic Koreans (1999), because of resistance from the Chinese government, and then it granted preferential immigration and legal rights only those Koreans who had emigrated from South Korea after its founding in 1948, thus excluding Chinese Koreans.⁶⁷⁶ However, after severe criticism, South Korea enacted a new law in 2004, which allowed first generation ethnic Koreans in China and Russia to also apply for citizenship.⁶⁷⁷

These tendencies were confirmed as common, by the results of Glick Schiller's research group, which found that exclusionist tendencies in the host society often lead to the strengthening of ties to the sending country, where similar hostile attitudes are not necessarily experienced. Moreover, it is usually only in the home location migrants may mirror the growth in their social capital as gained through labour migration. Thus, discrimination and the relative lowness of one's living standard in the receiving society tend to strengthen the migrants' ties to the home country.⁶⁷⁸ In the case of the Chinese Koreans, this theory worked in two ways, viz: initially, Chinese Koreans wished to identify with South Korea, as, from a deteriorated socio-economic situation, they imagined South Korea as a source of wealth. They were also proud of South Korea's economic success. However, the discriminative tendencies of the South Korean society, turned their affection back to some extent. In fact, many Chinese Koreans seem to live with a multiple national identity, through redefinition of their relationship to their national identity provided by China. Simultaneously though, they test the limits of their membership of the South Korean nation. This apparent existence of simultaneous multiple identities is well illustrated by the preferences of labour migrants: in

⁶⁷⁵ Che Zhejiu & Che Huishun 1998, 64; Jin Zhongguo 1994a, 234.

⁶⁷⁶ *The Korea Herald* 5 December 2001.

⁶⁷⁷ Those Chinese Koreans who took South Korean citizenship, but still returned to China, were punished with fines (RMB 1,000) or even imprisonment. Park 2005, 19.

⁶⁷⁸ Basch et al 1997, 261.

China, they wish to live in Yanji, a virtual "Little Seoul", but in Seoul, they bemoan homesickness in the local Chinatown.⁶⁷⁹

With this, it is possible to discern a shift away from the old socialist definitions of China's Koreans, which had assured Chinese Koreans a good socio-economic position, but which went bankrupt as China moved towards a market economy. Thus, in order to regain their position as a respected well-off nationality, Chinese Koreans redefined their nationality characteristics. In China, the Han Chinese symbolise every thing modern and were officially regarded as the model for minority nationalities to strive for, in their pursuit of modernization. However, instead of finding new content for their nationality characteristics from the Han Chinese, ordinary Korean people looked towards South Korea, and in so doing, challenged China's nationality-building process. Simultaneously, they discarded their categorization as a less-developed minority nationality, described as a little brother to the Han Chinese. In fact, as South Korea is more economically developed than China, the Chinese Korean could now also feel more modern than the Han Chinese, who were tied to a developing country.

In addition to political ideas, religious activities also spread through transnational ties. Christianity was not only perceived as a threat to the "chineseness" of the Yanbian Korean culture, but Christian congregations were considered a disguise for political infiltrators who aimed to disintegrate the country through peaceful means.⁶⁸⁰ As previously mentioned, South Korean missionaries worked not only among Chinese Koreans, but also among North Korean migrants and refugees, which made their activities even more irksome to the local authorities.

While staying in South Korea, many Chinese Koreans encountered Christianity. Until the 1980s, the influence of religion had been limited among Chinese Koreans in the Communist China⁶⁸¹, while in South Korea, one third of the population were Christians. One informant assumed that the Chinese Korean migrants were initially attracted to Christianity as they received support from South Korean believers while working in harsh social and economic conditions.⁶⁸² Christian organizations provided both practical help, e.g. free medical treatment,

⁶⁷⁹ For stories about this, see eg *The Korea Times* 31 October 2001.

⁶⁸⁰ Huang Shuo, 1997b.

⁶⁸¹ Manabe 1996.

⁶⁸² Unofficial discussions, Beijing 1996.

and also social and political support. For example, many Christian organizations supported Chinese Koreans in their claims against authorities for more human treatment. The most influential support came from the famous South Korean human rights activist, Pastor Soh Kyung-suk, who had taken up the cause of Chinese Koreans. He led the congregation of the Chinese Korean Church in Seoul.⁶⁸³

Even in China, Korean churches actively worked among Chinese Koreans, by sending both material and personnel help to local churches, and also ran welfare projects. Some churches had established their own congregations in Yanbian and in other areas of China.⁶⁸⁴ When back in China, migrants often joined a local Christian congregation. By the year 1996, the Christian community in Yanbian had grown to include nearly 10 per cent of the Korean population. In addition to return migrants, these congregations also appealed to locals who looked for support in the deteriorating socio-economic conditions.⁶⁸⁵

In order to counteract the impact of foreign political and religious infiltrators, three measures were taken in Yanbian in the late 1990s. Firstly, the education on patriotism, socialism and religious policy was intensified. Secondly, leadership was strengthened. One specific way to create an effective working structure was the establishment of leaders' small groups to counteract foreign infiltrators (*Fan shentou lingdao xiaozu*) at prefecture and county level. Thirdly, the management of foreign religious activities was reinforced.⁶⁸⁶

Yet, at the beginning of the following decade these issues still remained on the agenda. A report from 2001 on the new tasks of the ethnic work (*minzu gongzuo*) stated that the unequal and slow economic development negatively impacted on the cohesion and the so called "centripetality"⁶⁸⁷ of the ethnic groups. Furthermore, certain international factors and religious activities were stated to pose a latent threat to the ethnic unity and social stability of some areas. However, this particular document did not provide any policy proposals beyond the

⁶⁸³ *The Korea Times* 31 October 2001; *The Korea Herald* 20 April 2002.

⁶⁸⁴ Manabe 1996.

⁶⁸⁵ Interview 5, Yanbian 1996; 2, Yanbian 1999.

⁶⁸⁶ Zhichi "liange libukai", diaodong "liange jijixing", buduan tuijin minzu tuanji jinbu shiye xiang qian fazhan. An article written by staff members of the Jilin Provincial Minwei and the Jilin Provincial Research Center for Economic Development. Huang Shuo 1997b, 114-115.

⁶⁸⁷ Chinese term, antonymous to "centrifugality", used to refer to the process where the links between ethnic minorities and the center become tighter.

standard phrases to train ethnic minority cadres in the spirit of the "three representatives" (*sange daibiao*).⁶⁸⁸ This dilemma will persist as long as the Sino-Korean border exists. The situation also constantly evolves, depending on the position of the Yanbian Koreans in China and in South Korea, and shifts in the political constellation of the Korean Peninsula also affect the policies directed toward the ethnic Koreans.

Conclusions

This chapter has described the local policies and practices related to ethnically-based international labour export. In Yanbian, these practices and policies mainly emerged as a response to local developments; not as a result of a proactive initiative. Labour export arose from a demand from South Korea, mediated to Yanbian by the provincial foreign trade corporation JIC. The official labour export infrastructure - the licensed companies, training centres, intermediaries and regulations – was established to counteract the unlicensed migration activities, and maintain social and political stability. Thus, the initial main local motivation was not economic development, but stability maintenance. Social stability was the major concern in a border area inhabited by a cross-border ethnic minority. Without this fear of instability, the labour-export infrastructure would have probably developed more slowly.⁶⁸⁹ Throughout the 1990s, the Yanbian foreign trade administration was preoccupied with the UNDP-backed Tumen river development programme, and the prefectural leadership and authorities prioritized tasks that arose from foreign direct investments and the commodity trade. With these preferences, labour export was a neglected field of business.

In general, the local government was supportive of labour migration and later developed interest in the various development opportunities afforded by the remittances. The officials were less interested in successful migrants and their integration into the economic development of Yanbian. Thus, they did take measures to promote migration but not effective policies to transfer and inject the new capitals into Yanbian and local development. Yet, on the other hand, as a part of its drive to reduce unemployment, the Department of Labour and

⁶⁸⁸ Han Changzhen 2001, 286.

⁶⁸⁹ Incidentally, this was also the essential logic behind the government policies aimed to promote and regularize domestic migration – an insight provided by Luo Guifen, an expert on China's domestic migration, for which I am grateful.

Social Security initiated a programme to transform return migrants into entrepreneurs. When compared with coastal regions, the combination of organs involved in regular labour export was rather similar, with the exception that the *Qiaoban* was not involved.

Also, noteworthy is that the political sensitiveness of Korean transnational ethnic ties did not prevent local officials from the promotion of ethnically-based labour export. The reduction in unemployment through labour export was more important for the stability of the area than the South Korean ethno-political impact on the workers. The South Korean influence was reduced, to some extent, by sending migrants to South Korean companies elsewhere than in South Korea proper. Officials attempted to restrict the political influence by also promoting the concept of "Korean culture with Chinese characteristic", the management of regular migrants abroad, and with preventative measures such as pre-migration ideological and political training. In part because of the presumed loyalty of the Yanbian Koreans, Yanbian was able to develop ethnically-based labour export relatively early, when compared, for example, with Xinjiang. However, the main reason for the early and intensive labour export remained the demand for low-skilled Korean-speaking workers in the South Korean labour markets. In Xinjiang and Yunnan, this crucial "pull" factor was absent.

5. STATE-SUPPORTED TRANSFERS OF ETHNIC TRANSNATIONAL CAPITAL FOR THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT OF YANBIAN

The two previous chapters have examined the utilization of the transnational Korean community in two different areas, viz: firstly, the ethnic Korean capital transfers in the traditional manner of overseas Chinese work, and secondly the promotion of capital transfers through ethnically-based labour migration. Thus, drawing from the previous information and findings, it is now important to determine similarities, differences, and intertwinement that arise in the policies and practices of these two fields. Further, comparison with other parts of China will be made to identify and explain any specific features which the mobilization of transnational ties in Yanbian developed and why? First, attempts by local officials to channel transnational ethnic capital to Yanbian from above, and subsequently, economic and political aspects of ethnically-based transnational capital transfers into Yanbian will be examined.

Transnationalism from Above in Yanbian

Emergence and Institutionalization of Transnationalism from Above

In the mid 1980s, as regulations on international mobility were eased in China, ordinary people in Yanbian were gradually able to contact the Korean communities in the Northeast Asia. However, for this period, neither transnationalism, nor transnationalism activated from above, is very relevant – the ties between ordinary Yanbian Koreans and other Koreans in the Northeast Asia, were only just emerging. Contacts with foreign Koreans, which the government was spinning in an unofficial sphere were strictly controlled, and occurred at the high level of institutionalization and were within strict supervision of the Party. The government only began to provide official support for people-to-people transnational ties in the late 1980s, which led to a growth in the number of contacts, but these ties did not yet reach the intensity and breadth which is typical for transnational communities. Thereby, it is more appropriate to discuss *internationalization*, rather than transnationalism activated from above, at this time,

It is arguable that Yanbian Koreans first developed a transnational community with North Koreans and Soviet Koreans, as they frequently visited their relatives in these countries and created close ties with their relatives and friends there. These visits were partly supported by the local authorities as profitable small-scale trade was conducted at these times. Especially the shuttle trade with North Korea was profitable as in the early 1990s, the annual value of the unofficial trade was estimated to exceed RMB 100 million.⁶⁹⁰ After the establishment of official Sino-South Korean relations into 1992 Yanbian became fully integrated in a regional ethnic Korean transnational community, and subsequently the state-supported transnational activities expanded into South Korea.

The web of ethnic ties which Yanbian Koreans re-established with other Koreans in Northeast Asia, created a transnational community, which match the criteria defined by Faist (see pages 33-34). The ethnic Koreans were bound together by a high degree of social cohesion and common repertoire of symbolic bonds, such as a common ethnic background. Further, the legacy of a traumatic dispersion caused by crop failure and hunger, as well as by a colonial power, had established strong a diasporic link between Yanbian and the two Koreas. The so called diffuse solidarity which these common social and symbolic bonds created, provided a basis to mobilize Korean ties beyond interpersonal contacts with all members of the community. The politicization of these ties further substantiated them. Yet, the meanings attached to them were not fixed but evolved along with the development of the relations between the ethnic groups, and the shifting policies of the South Korean government. The diffuse solidarity can be estimated to have been at its highest just after 1992, but faded to some extent as the first flush of euphoria waned.

Once official relations were established, the local government was able to launch a full fledged mobilization of Korean ties. State-supported attempts to activate ethnic ties proceeded on both high and low levels of institutionalization. Government departments and government affiliated companies were instructed to span ties with South Korean counterparts to attract investments and promote trade, labour export included. Semi-official and unofficial associations were mobilized to support these attempts, too. At the same time, the local government encouraged ordinary people to persuade their relatives and acquaintances in

⁶⁹⁰ Ji Kaiqi 1994, 10.

South Korea and other countries to contribute to Yanbian's economy in one way or another. The government hoped that even grassroots contacts would produce new investments. This was not an unfounded expectation. The South Korean investments, which Yanbian had received before 1992, were based to a great extent on interpersonal relationships. Some South Korean businesspeople who already in the 1980s had contacts with Yanbian, had expressed their interest in contributing to Yanbian's development. Local officials also exhorted Yanbian Koreans to find employment in South Korea. Locals, who successfully mediated trade, investment or labour export deals into Yanbian, were granted rewards. Thus, from 1992 onward, investments, trade and labour mobility were all integrated parts of government-activated transnationalism from above. With regard to the practices and policies of the local government, the distinction between activator and actor was blurred. At the prefecture level, the government was both the activator, which defined the framework, goals and methods of transnational activities, but also itself a participator in the activities.

In addition to this energetic mobilization, the activities of the government also determined to control and regulate the emerging ties. In this respect, the eventual political side effects of cooperation with co-ethnics in a kin-state, placed the transnational activities under a spotlight. Moreover, for example social instability fears caused by the dishonest migration brokers forced local government to reinforce the management of the ethnically-based migration business. Therefore, transnationalism from above included two aspects: promotion and control. This will be considered in detail later.

In Yanbian, the mobilization of Korean transnational ties drew on the practices inherited from overseas Chinese work. The units engaged in the promotion of ties with foreign Koreans, employed similar means as those responsible for overseas Chinese work, liaising with the transnational ethnic community both at home and abroad, they sent out and invited in delegations and prominent persons. Both official channels and the channels of the "people's diplomacy" were used. The connections with foreign Koreans were fostered both to attract Korean investments, technology, expertise and donations, as well as to promote ethnically-based labour migration.

The main organ for the overseas Chinese work, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (*Qiaoban*), was however not involved in liaison activities with foreign Koreans. Unlike the *Qiaoban*, the Party-related association, the Yanbian Overseas Union, had already expanded its activities in the mid-1980s to also include foreign Koreans. For some years, the Ethnic Affairs Commission was also involved in this work. While the government did not have a separate purpose directed unit which dealt with the foreign Koreans, as for example similar to the *Qiaoban*, many different units of the government were involved. However, although the *Qiaoban* was not engaged in the work, its operating methods were known and thus used by the other government organs. Nor was the Yanbian *Qiaoban* engaged in labour migration, as in opposed contrast to its work profile in the coastal regions. However, a change took place at the end of the period studied. The Yanbian *Qiaoban's* work was expanded to also include liaison with new migrants. An additional difference to coastal, predominantly Han Chinese areas, was the involvement of the *Minwei* in the attempts to promote transnational capital transfers.

A comparison between Xinjiang, Yunnan and Yanbian revealed that the role of the *Minwei* and the *Qiaoban* in the promotion of transnational ethnic capital transfers differed regionally. However, although the administration was fragmented, there are signs that a more coherent system is under construction. The Central State has become aware of the potential resources and other advantages which are available through a more concerted effort to mobilize and control transnational ethnic communities of ethnic minorities, and as such the structure and practices of the organs engaged might become more coherent in the future through an increasing involvement of the *Qiaoban* in these affairs.

The attempts of the local government to mobilize ethnic Korean resources proceeded in official, semi-official as well as unofficial spheres, and even beyond them into public and private domains. In the official sphere, the government units urged their ethnic Korean employees to mobilize their foreign acquaintances and relatives, and liaise with their foreign colleagues and administrative counterparts. Semi-official (*banguan banmin*) associations, such as the Yanbian Overseas Union, which was sub-ordinate to the Party, were naturally integrated into these efforts to utilize foreign Korean resources. Similarly, unofficial elite associations, which were related to the Party and the government through interpersonal

contacts, were integrated into the process, too. Popular associations, which were not connected with the government or the Party, were also invited to support these policies: e.g. disseminate information about Yanbian and raise positive interest in it among foreign Koreans.

The elite associations were helpful not only in these activities. In any troublesome or sensitive cases where the government was unable to intervene, they came to the government's assistance, for example, they could come to help when business negotiations stalled. They were also involved in notifying the offences of South Korean illegal migration brokers to South Korean government organs. In politically sensitive issues such as that of the Jiandao controversy, the associations mediated the views of Yanbianese and South Korean officials, so as to reduce suspicions which impeded cooperation in all fields.

The government even extended their mobilization efforts into the private sphere, by, for example, making home visits to those families who had foreign relatives abroad.⁶⁹¹ Similarly, officials visited migrant households, to ensure the steady flow of remittances and proper conduct abroad. This management even reached as far as regular migrants who were abroad.

The Multifaceted Inputs into the Policies and Practises

The attempts to activate contacts with foreign Koreans were not solely based on a local prefecture level decision. There was a great regional interest to invigorate these contacts before 1992, but the enthusiasm was blocked by the central government and the local pro-North Korean faction. After 1992, the central government encouraged Yanbian to mobilize all resources available for the successful realization of the Tumen River Area Programme. Other state-sanctioned policies, too, such as for example, to maintain social stability, attain a moderately well-off society (*xiaokang shehui*), reduction of unemployment, and diversification of the rural economy, prompted the mobilization of foreign Korean contacts. Labour export, too, was considered an important means to achieve these objectives.

In some cases, the prefectural government also listened to the experiences and suggestions of the lower level units of government. Successful new practises, which were adopted at the

⁶⁹¹ Jin Shulian & Min Guangdao 1988, 155; Interview 15, Yanbian 2004.

lower level, were then passed on as recommended models. In such way, government input came both from above and below.

These policies and practices were to some extent influenced from outside the government apparatus. Different associations which were utilized by the government in the work to attract FDI, and the arrangement of workplaces abroad, also attempted to influence the policies. For example, the Research Association of International Issues gave suggestions to related departments on how to inject the economic potential inherent in returnees' and transmigrants' new capital into local economy. They had direct communication channels with the political elite, and informed politicians of their views in meetings and through written reports which circulated among the decision-makers.

The impact of South Korea cannot be neglected. For example, the demand for a cheap labour force which emerged in South Korea at the turn of the 1990s, prompted South Korean companies to recruit workers from Yanbian. This prompted the local Yanbian government to find politically appropriate ways to manage the emerging ethnic transnational economic exchanges. On the other hand, the restrictions placed upon labour immigration in South Korea encouraged irregular migration, as employers were unable to recruit workers through official channels. Hence, the policies and practices of transnationalism activated from above developed under pressure from the central government, as a reaction to local and regional developments and through various constructive inputs from within and outside the local government.

Mobilization for Whose Benefit?

The central tenet of the definition of transnationalism from above, be it either activators or actors, is that the benefit it generates is for the elite, thus whom did the government-activated practices benefit in Yanbian? The main motivation for these practices was the fulfilment of state-sanctioned targets, which then would secure the cadres' bonuses and career prospects. In this way, the authorities were clearly engaged in transnationalism from above. Additionally though, these activities also benefited local ordinary people, as they created more employment opportunities and general well-being. In fact, to some extent these activities were initiated as a

reaction to the needs of the ordinary people, but only when the dissatisfaction with poor migration management threatened social stability and thereby the positions of the elite. In effect then, this transnationalism from above, remained elite-centred even though it also developed in interaction with grassroots transnationalism.

Conversely, the grassroots ethnic Korean transnationalism from below, was clearly an act of resistance against the poor economic conditions of Yanbian and the stigma of a "little-brother ethnic minority in an underdeveloped China" connected to them. South Korea provided a new frame of reference whereby Yanbian Koreans could identify with modernity and economic development which was far ahead of China. However, the exclusionist tendencies of the South Korean society created an ambivalent feeling. The migrants did not feel welcomed by their kin-state. Instead, Yanbian was a place where they could be perceived as having risen in social status and where they did not face discrimination from their ethnic kin. Through the practices of transnationalism from below the Yanbian Koreans were able to vent their dissatisfaction with China, but still remain committed to it.

Although this transnationalism from below challenged the officially approved ethnic and national identity as projected by the Yanbian elite, it was still supported by the local state. The authorities allowed grassroots activities to develop provided they did not contradict crucial policy issues, and were even encouraged for as long as they generated more benefits than disadvantages. However, this expansion of grassroots interaction with South Korea was accompanied by various educational measures to maintain the loyalty of Yanbian Koreans committed to China.

Thereby, it is reasonable to conclude that the state-led transnationalism from above generated economic development, when it is defined as "a process that influences growth and restructure of an economy to enhance the economic well being of a community: the creation of jobs and wealth, and the improvement of quality of life" (see page 9). Ethnic transnational bonds transmitted capital which supported the growth of the local economy and its restructure. Further, these ties also provided a way to partially "outsource" economic development. New employment opportunities were created abroad and the wealth acquired there was transferred back home. However, the benefits of these capital transfers were not distributed equally,

although the local administration did make some attempts to expand the scope of recipients to also include those, who, for example, did not have relatives in South Korea, Han Chinese included. As such, it could be argued that transnationalism from above inherently supported "development from above" in accordance with the state-sanctioned development plans as defined by the Han Chinese.

"Sweet and Sour" Ethnic Capital Transfers

The Sweet Aspects

In Yanbian, the transnational social capital worked both as "glue and lubricant", to quote Xiangming Chen.⁶⁹² This created a sense of togetherness and encouraged cooperation. In Yanbian, this seemed to hold true for the promotion of both business and labour migration. The interpersonal ties proved important for the business links and official labour migration during the early years of opening up. As the ethnically-based ties became more institutionalized, the role of *the interpersonal ties* declined. In contrast, *a common ethnic background* remained important in the long term, as it provided both practical and economic benefits for the business partners and the employers of the migrants. Investors were able to recruit a Korean-language work force in Yanbian, and also found a keen market for the Korean-style services and goods they provided and produced respectively.

The motivation for foreign ethnic businessmen to get engaged with Yanbian was in the first place clearly based on the calculations of profitability. Yanbian was not a target for similar South Korean "nationalistic" investments as North Korea was, yet, the ethnic and cultural commonalities and eventual personal ties with Yanbian surely had influenced their decisions to some extent.

Korean transnational ties have provided significant resources for the development of Yanbian's economy. In addition to benefiting local Koreans, the ethnic ties also contributed to the well-being of the Han Chinese. Firstly, South Korean investments and new lavish consumption patterns created employment for both Han Chinese and Koreans. Secondly,

⁶⁹² Chen 2000.

when the contacts, which were initially based on ethnic ties, became more institutionalized, the importance of the ethnic affinity in interactions diminished, and to a larger extent, the Han Chinese were then able to also participate in activities with South Koreans. This applied to both business activities and labour export. Further, it is fair to assume that the integration of the Han Chinese into the Korean-paved channels was the result of a deliberate policy, as it helped the Han Chinese to gain access to these new resources and thus to allocate the South Korean capital transfers more equally, in ethnic terms. As a result, the Han Chinese are now emerging as competitors for the traditionally non-Han transnational ethnic resources.

The successful capital transfers of Yanbian could easily be ascribed to the high level of education among ethnic Koreans, but on closer examination, the transnational activities show a more complicated picture. To be sure, the highly-educated Yanbian Koreans with interpersonal contacts with foreign Korean businesspeople, political leaders and academics all provided useful resources and facilitated the capital transfers. Without these contacts, transnational activities at the high level of institutionalization would not have expanded on the same scale as they did, yet, those transnational activities which occurred at the lower levels of institutionalization were mainly conducted by low-educated peasants and workers. For example, the Korean-speaking labour force which attracted South Korean companies to the area was not part of the highly-educated population. Likewise, those low-educated return migrants who then turned entrepreneurs drove the expansion of the service sector. Although a low education-level of the population has usually been believed to hinder economic development, yet, in Yanbian, the alleged low "quality" of the migrants did not impede the emergence of a migration-generated economy, including entrepreneurship. Thus, clearly, low-educated ethnic minorities and peasants, too, were a formidable force in economic development. Nevertheless, the potential embedded in migrants, beyond their remittances, remained largely ignored by the local authorities.

The Biased Focus of Transnationalism from Above

During the period which this research covers, the main interest of the local government was clearly in the foreign Korean community, and not in the Chinese Korean migrants. The authorities encouraged efforts to utilize these ethnic ties to increase the flow of investments to

Yanbian and to find new channels of labour export abroad. Business cooperation with South Korean companies was also regarded as an effective source of new human and social capital: the local companies involved and their local employees, would acquire new technology, managerial skills, and more experience of international cooperation. The greatest benefit of labour export was that it helped to alleviate unemployment. In this way, foreign Koreans were important allies in the promotion of both business and labour export. In contrast with the coastal overseas Chinese areas, the remittances and donations sent by foreign Koreans did not play a greater role in Yanbian's development plans.

With regard to the new migrants, the local government was mainly interested in the remittances of the ordinary labour migrants. Generally, the labour migrants' new ideas and skills were regarded as important, but only at the end of the period under scrutiny did the local government initiate policies to encourage the returnees to start up new undertakings, which themselves were a part of a re-employment campaign under the strategy for the reinvigoration of the Northeast. Officials did not launch policies *per se* to attract successful migrants to return, for if they returned, there was a high risk that they would only add to the unemployment statistics. Thus, the government was initially not that concerned with injecting the labour migrants' new human and social capital acquired abroad into the local economic development. Policies to attract exchange students and professional expatriates to return home were launched by the prefecture, but this took place alongside the national level campaigns and did not involve much enthusiasm.

This is in stark contrast to the coastal regions, where the new migrants have replaced old overseas communities as the main target for the overseas Chinese work. New migrants provide resources which are needed in the current phase of development of the coastal areas: high-tech, scientific knowledge and new kinds of business networks. Coastal areas provide exciting opportunities for young professionals or business-minded labour migrants and many of them return, or contribute, to the economic development of these areas from abroad. In contrast, Yanbian has not had a similar appeal as the coastal areas. If Yanbianese exchange students, professional expatriates or successful labour migrants have returned to China, they most likely settled in coastal areas or larger cities in Northeast China instead, rather than in Yanbian.

Still, some new migrants and returnees had made investments and established companies in Yanbian, but this was done mainly on their own initiative and without any active involvement of the government. The government was not committed to the effective transfer of the wide variety of capital available abroad. Instead, it promoted transfers selectively depending on the demands of the development plans and the rationale of the fixed ways of practices and approaches.

This then raises the question as to why the local government was heavily engaged with the foreign Koreans but not the Yanbian Koreans, and why did it remain indifferent to the full potential of new migrants other than only interested in their remittances? The reasons for this biased approach might be due to the economic traditions of Northeast China and Yanbian, and the stereotypes attached to labour migrants. Due to Yanbian's position at the border, state interventions in local affairs have been pervasive.⁶⁹³ The role of the state has been further emphasized because Northeast China is a base for state-owned large-scale heavy industrial factories, and the dominance of state-owned industry has left small-scale private companies in its shadow, as they have not received the attention and appreciation of the regional economy administration. This approach extended to Yanbian and became influential at the onset of the Tumen River Area Development Programme: with this, Yanbian should develop into an international trade hub with the aid of large-scale infrastructural and industrial projects. This model seems to have become stigmatized in the minds of the local officials under the influence of the Tumen Programme hype, who did not regard small-scale ventures worth any attention. This kind of attitude prevailed, as there was no strong tradition of private entrepreneurship in Yanbian to counteract it - neither among the Han Chinese nor the Koreans. The push for a change came from above. The strategy for the reinvigoration of the Northeast, sanctioned from above, placed more emphasis on small and middle-scale companies and the service sector, which triggered a new direction. However, it is still too early to estimate what kind of impact this policy will have in practice. For example Barry Naughton, a specialist on the Chinese Economy, claims that China's border regions have suffered significantly from the

⁶⁹³ This is in contrast to the experiences of Fujian, which is strategically located at the sea border opposite to Taiwan. There, the state interventions in the local economy were minimal, which allowed the local administration to take its own initiative in economic development, and which was aided by a long tradition of entrepreneurship in the region.

state-led economic experiments rather than from their absence.⁶⁹⁴ The centrally sanctioned economic policies have so far had a bad record in border regions. However, this new policy may still prove beneficial.

With regard to the role of labour migrants in the development of local business, the attitudes of local government were even biased, as labour migrants were, in general, not considered as able to initiate and run businesses. The frequently heard complaint was that their "quality" (*suzhi*) was too poor. Furthermore, in the tradition of strong governmental intervention in local affairs, cadres were accustomed to simply carry out the specific tasks assigned to them, of which the maintenance of public order was one of the central tasks. Migrants themselves only became the object of local policies when the migration business itself became problematic and threatened social stability, and had it not, the local government would probably have remained indifferent to the migration business for longer. However, as government officials began to later learn just how much the otherwise minor remittances actually totalled, they became excited. The accumulating huge sums were something which they could appreciate, but nevertheless, at the beginning they were incapable of promoting any viable policies to direct the remittances into the local economy. Further, the local "Confucian way" of introducing new policies only after thorough studies and enactment of related regulations and laws, slowed the pace of any reforms. This style of administration was in stark contrast with the "Cantonese way" for which it was common to adventurously try out new strategies even before any clear signals of approval had been received from Beijing.⁶⁹⁵ Thus, it would be reasonable to claim that it was the low *suzhi* of the officials rather, than that of the migrants, which was actually the problem.

The biased uses of transnational capital is thus an outcome of several factors, which can be highlighted with a comparison to Frank Pieke's research findings in a study on political structures and agency in rural Yunnan.⁶⁹⁶ In this, he explains the lack of initiative to develop the local economy with institutional arrangements and established patterns of decision-making. In the village which he studied, the system of administration did not give local cadres many incentives for a proactive role in local development and for this reason they failed to

⁶⁹⁴ Naughton 2004, cited in Barabantseva 2005, 200.

⁶⁹⁵ Hsing 1996, 2251.

⁶⁹⁶ Pieke 2004, 530. I am grateful to Xiang Biao for introducing this article to me.

create a pro-development bureaucratic agency. A similar lack of incentives was discernible in Yanbian. The career prospects of the local officials were connected to other targets than labour export, thus it would have been pointless to put energies in non-prioritized pursuits, such as the promotion of small-scale entrepreneurship among returnees. Furthermore, Pieke explains the lack of interest in new forms of entrepreneurship with the established patterns of decision-making, when he claims that the specific patterns of administration also produced, in Bourdieu's terms, "a specific *habitus* that privileges certain responses, reactions, and decisions above others". Furthermore, "once firmly established, the bureaucratic habitus of local cadres can be a formidable force in its own right, privileging and indeed presenting as natural and unavoidable, certain options, while rendering others impossible or simply irrelevant".⁶⁹⁷ Just this type of fixed attitudes and closed thinking seemed to block the introduction of new ideas in Yanbian. Small-scale businesses were regarded with disdain and the labour migrants were excluded from local business plans as they were considered as unqualified and thus irrelevant. Migrants were automatically represented as not in possession of the type of qualities required by successful entrepreneurs, and this made it impossible to integrate them in any business development plans.

When comparing these findings with Yunnan, the "low quality" –discourse also impeded the utilization of transnational ethnic ties even there. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern a difference between the two in that it would seem that in Yanbian, the stigma of "low quality" was attached in general to the peasants, and not to the ethnic minorities. Since the Koreans have maintained the highest level of education among China's nationalities, this label cannot so easily be collectively placed on them. In this respect, Yanbian resembles more Han Chinese areas than ethnic minority areas.

Political Concerns Turn the Capital Sour

The policies and practices of transnationalism from above were also steered by political concerns. While the pursuit for economic development drove activities forward and were both promoted and restricted by the concerns for social stability, the political considerations placed constraints on the scope and intensity of the state-supported transnational activities. The

⁶⁹⁷ Pieke 2004, 530, 531.

political concerns were manifested in three ways, viz: a general mistrust towards foreigners, concerns for border security, and the unity of the country and the nation.

Such mistrust and suspicion towards foreigners had been a pervasive element during the early period of opening up in all parts of China.⁶⁹⁸ From this background, it is easy to imagine that creating contacts with foreign businesspeople was difficult. Since officials could not be certain about the political motives of foreigners, it was prudent to not jeopardize own careers by taking risks with the strangers. Thereby, the first business contracts on China's coastal regions were made through locals, who had relatives overseas, and as these were Chinese family members they were not regarded as strangers, and so could be trusted. In this way, the suspicion towards foreigners was not specific for Yanbian. North Koreans were regarded as brothers in arms, so they fell outside any suspicions, but in contrast, nationals of other countries, especially the South Koreans, were viewed with reservations. This attitude probably prevailed, because of Yanbian's strategic position on the border and its ethnic ties with South Korea.

Liaison activities with foreign Koreans were also restricted through concern for border security. In what respect was this typical for Yanbian as an autonomous prefecture at the continental border? The coastal province Fujian faced partly similar problems. Taiwan (Republic of China) which is located opposite Fujian, created a major threat to China, especially because of its military cooperation with the USA. After 1949, Fujian was under permanent military threat for more than two decades.⁶⁹⁹ Thus, the concern for border security was also a priority there. Suspicion towards foreigners persisted even in Fujian during the early years of open door policy. However, overseas Chinese relatives were welcomed. In the early 1980s some Taiwanese whose ancestral home was in Fujian were fearful about the type of welcome they would receive in the communist China. The *Qiaoban* in Fujian was occupied with convincing them that visiting Fujian would not entail any problems.⁷⁰⁰ The case was partly different in Yanbian. There, suspicion towards South Koreans, even if they were relatives of local Koreans, persisted even after diplomatic relations between the countries had been established. The difference was probably caused by the existence of cross-border ethnic

⁶⁹⁸ Ong 1997, 175.

⁶⁹⁹ Chang 1996, 34, 39. I am grateful to Juha Tähkämaa for introducing this material to me.

⁷⁰⁰ Interview 1, Xiamen 2005.

ties. In Fujian, there was no threat of ethnic separatist activities fuelled by a non-Chinese kin-state.

However, this issue had a different nature at the continental border. At the land border, there is no protective sea belt between the countries, but only a line on a contiguous land area separates the countries. In addition, border areas inhabited by border-crossing ethnic minorities, evoke specific concerns. This is clearly reflected by the Chinese term of "cross-border ethnic question" which, by definition, encompasses problems of border security and national unity.

When compared with coastal Han-Chinese regions, the particularities of Yanbian are most evident in questions related to ethnic, cultural and national identity. Although the overseas Chinese had adopted strategies of flexible citizenship, as identified by Aihwa Ong⁷⁰¹, in the late 1990s the Chinese state launched policies to incorporate the new generations of overseas Chinese into China's modernization project. The state welcomed their participation in the country's development despite their shifting national and cultural allegiances. These practices of the state have been identified in detail in Elena Barabantseva's PhD thesis, in which she describes how the Chinese state itself has begun to exercise flexible forms of citizenship for overseas Chinese. Instead of attracting the overseas Chinese to return to China and serve the state, the new strategy was to attract them to serve the Chinese nation (*hua*), wherever they lived.⁷⁰² The state remained flexible with regard to their legal citizenship and cultural belonging.

Yet, in the case of the ethnic minorities, flexible notions of citizenship are more difficult to identify. This is especially so with regard to the legal citizenship, as for example, China has protested against South Korea's plans to grant citizenship to Chinese Koreans.⁷⁰³ An illuminating case is provided by those Chinese Koreans who took South Korean citizenship for economic reasons, but trusted that they could regain their Chinese citizenship, once their employment contract in South Korea ended, but the Chinese state levied a fine on them of

⁷⁰¹ Ong uses the term "flexible citizenship" to refer especially to the "strategies and effects of mobile managers, technocrats and professionals seeking both to circumvent *and* benefit from different nation-state regimes by selecting different sites for investment, work, and family relocation". Ong 1999, 112.

⁷⁰² Barabantseva 2005, 158-163.

⁷⁰³ Lee 2003.

RMB 1,000 and even imprisoned some, when they returned to China⁷⁰⁴, a treatment which is hardly applied to any Han Chinese who had taken foreign citizenship. However, with regard to cultural identity, the state has not attempted to totally prevent the South Korean influence on the Chinese Korean culture. The impact of the modern and developed South Korea on the Yanbian Korean culture might even have been regarded as positive in some aspects. Nevertheless, the local government took measures to foster a particular Chinese Korean ethno-cultural identity. The state used Korean cultural notions in a flexible and selective manner to smoothen transnational capital flows, but did not start to experiment with the citizenship of the Chinese Koreans so as to maximise their benefits for China's development. In this respect, the political risks of eventual regional disintegration, were considered too high.

Among Yanbian, Xinjiang and Yunnan, the first two faced the problem which the shifting ethnic loyalties eventually entailed. Yanbian was able to cope with this challenge, thanks to the trustworthy relationship created during the 1940s and 1950s between the Yanbian Koreans and the central government. When the prefecture began to expand its relations with South Korea, Yanbian emphasized work on ethnic unity to maintain the good record. In contrast, the relationship between Beijing and ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, could not be described as very trustworthy, on either side. For this reason, the authorities in Xinjiang have been more cautious than their Yanbianese colleagues in the promotion of ethnic and family ties with the Central Asian and Arab countries. Although high level Islam-based liaison activities had already taken place earlier, in Xinjiang official attempts to mobilize family ties are more recent, and any way, these activities involved a strong element of control. The scepticism and lack of trust between the Han Chinese and Xinjiang's ethnic minorities have hindered the integration of the ethnic minority transnational ties into local economic development plans. Although the threat of separatist activities endured even in Yanbian, the local administration has learned to manage the intensive ties in a way which has, so far, apparently been acceptable by Beijing, but how far did the limits of approved transnational activities reach?

Although investments in themselves can be regarded as ethnically quite apolitical, the work to attract investments included interaction with foreign Korean businesspeople. Moreover, the investments themselves often contained agreements that Korean expatriate staff that would

⁷⁰⁴ Park 2005, 19.

oversee the business in Yanbian or train the local workers. Thereby, also investments were connected with eventual political problems, and the same held true for donations, too. Further, officials who worked in the foreign trade departments were warned about the dangers of foreign infiltrators, which resulted in some preferring to distance rather than to expand and deepen, cooperation with South Koreans. Transnational activities beyond the official sphere also came under the spotlight, as for example to reinforce control over the activities of unofficial associations, it was suggested that even they should have a Party cell.

Labour migrants could also be supposed to be under a strong Korean nationalistic influence and thus form an eventual force for national disintegration. However, there appeared not have been any serious attempts to obstruct labour mobility for political reasons. Instead, only preventative methods, such as education, to avoid change in a migrant's national allegiance, were used. In fact, that the government promoted ethnically-based migration to countries other than South Korea, was perhaps an attempt to deduce the likelihood of a change in ethnic and national identity. These attempts also included activities directed to define the pure contents of the Chinese Korean culture versus the South Korean culture. Furthermore, the management of migrants even reached abroad, although the unregistered migrants were of course out of reach of government control. Nevertheless, the migrant mobility flowed freely, as from the government's perspective the advantages far outweighed the disadvantages.

It would appear that both the control and self-control in the realm of organized activities were strict and especially so in the highly institutionalized international economic cooperation which took place close to the political core. Unorganized, individual labour migrants were under less strict surveillance. Nevertheless, migrants were not permitted to organize while abroad. When migration-related acts of control occurred in Yanbian, it was mainly as a result of the threat of social instability. The unofficial unorganized small scale trade seemed to flow quite unrestricted, since it neither threatened social stability nor the unity of the state. Thus, at the grassroots level, unorganized transnational activities were allowed to operate freely, but collective activities were only approved if under the guidance of the Party. At a higher level of institutionalization, be it individuals, government units or companies, transnational activities were required to proceed only according to a strict code of operation. Hence, the

criteria for the approved transnational practices of Yanbian can be summarized into two key concepts, viz: disciplined organizations and a trustworthy relationship with Beijing.

The following table is an attempt to collate positive and negative aspects of ethnic transnational capital transfers from the viewpoint the government.

Table 6. Positive vs Negative Ethnic Transnational Capital from the Viewpoint of the Local Government

	Negative capital (economic, social, human)	Positive capital (economic, social, human)
Social stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discontent created by fraudulent migration brokers - discontent created by increasing inequality among and between ethnic groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - investments and migration create jobs (returnee entrepreneurs, use of remittances and savings) which enhance stability - better living standard reduces discontent with local government
Political stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - nationalist and separatist political ideas a threat to border security and national unity - cross-border political activity of South Koreans toward North Korea - experiences from participation in civil society activities and protest campaigns in South Korea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - economic development and higher living standard reinforce loyalty toward China - exclusionist tendencies and discrimination in South Korea reinforce loyalty toward China
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - financial losses arising from frauds connected with migration arrangements - loss of skilled workers - migration costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - remittances, savings, investments, donations, trade income. - new skills, knowledge, ideas, attitudes, networks. - family investments in education - migration generated businesses

When promoting transnational capital transfers in their daily work, local officials had to find a delicate balance between the positive and negative effects. In many cases their careers were at stake, and political infiltration or social instability closed the doors for their promotion. On the other hand, large amounts of investments and labour migrants increased their chances for promotion and bonuses. As such, economic development and reduction of unemployment were important objectives. They were also the main central means to reduce the threat of social instability and to maintain the loyalty of Yanbian Koreans to China's side. Finding this right balance was not an easy task and must have resulted in the temptation to surely play on the safe side.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The broad aim of this work has been to study the utilization of cross-border ethnic ties in the economic development of China's cross-border minorities, a topic which has been marginalized in prior research. This research was further defined as a study on ethnic transnational capital transfers, which were approached with two new methods. First, both old and new transnational communities have been combined in the study. Secondly, the definition of transnationalism from above has been further defined into two different methodological categories: actors and activators. The focus of this study has been the state-activated attempts to mobilize a wide range of Korean ethnic transnational ties in Yanbian, for local economic development.

The management of international migration and transnational ethnically-based business are both evolving fields, and thus this study has only described an early phase of their development in Yanbian. The practices and policies involved are going to change, although it can be assumed that the institutional arrangements will become more unified, but that regional differences in the policies and practices will prevail.

The Administrative and Political Framework of Transnational Ethnic Capital Transfers

The mobilization of transnational ties has provided China with huge reserves of resources, which have contributed to China's rise. This is a path which China is following with commitment. The whole field of official transnational networking on the part of the ethnic minorities, as well as with overseas Chinese appears to be undergoing a substantial change. The aim is clearly to include all available overseas resources to support the rise of China. Firstly, there is an emerging interest to incorporate China's ethnic minorities sojourning abroad into the category of the overseas Chinese, and the state is attempting to create a more cohesive system for their administration and mobilization. The system not only enhances the transfer of resources to China, but also provides a framework for the control of suspect anti-Chinese forces among China's ethnic minorities living abroad. Secondly, the scope of the work with the overseas Chinese is expanding, as "new migrants" are being incorporated into the category of the overseas Chinese. Although these two fields could merge in the future, it is

reasonable to assume that significant regional differences will remain as a result of the distinct ethnic compositions, as well as to the political and economic conditions prevailing in different parts of China.

Drawing on the traditions of overseas Chinese work, the Yanbian administration was able to mobilize various ethnic Korean resources for the development of the prefecture. When comparing overseas Chinese work with the mobilization of ethnic Korean networks, there are similarities in activities, but clear differences in the selection of the organs engaged in them. The administration of transnational relations of the ethnic minorities has been less institutionalized, less centralized, but more politicized. Despite the fact that the management of the transnational ties is fragmented, its policy is consistent, as it serves the state-sanctioned development plans. This seems to be a common feature of new emerging fields of governance in China.

Although the management of the Korean capital transfers to Yanbian was politically sensitive because of the *kuajie minzu* –question, to a large extent the work has not been restricted because of ethno-political issues. The central government has allowed the expansion of these ties because the Koreans had a solid record of devotion to the socialist cause of China. The fear of ethno-political influence from South Korea did not hinder the flow of ordinary Korean people to South Korea nor to any significant degree did it hinder their exchanges with the South Koreans. The local government only took heftier measures to tighten the control when the transnational activities threatened social stability, but the aim of these controls was not to prevent these activities.

The concern for foreign infiltration caused reservedness mainly in the inner courts of local bureaucracy. The reliability of the cadres was the crux. It seems that the transnational ties were permitted to expand as long as Beijing could trust that the Yanbian cadres could manage the ties in an appropriate way. The central tenets of Yanbian's approved transnational policies, were the trustworthy relations with the centre, and ethno-politically disciplined organizations.

In the course of the 1980s and early 1990s, Yanbian Koreans were gradually interconnected to the Korean transnational community. Their relationship to this community has evolved

from a fervent Korea-fever to disillusionment. Contrary to the fears of China's leaders, transnational ethnic relations did not inevitably undermine the loyalty of ethnic Koreans. Indeed, deeper contacts with ethnic kin abroad seemed to strengthen their ties to China. Thus, contrary to the cautionary assessments both in China and in the West, this research suggests that transnational ethnically-based economic exchanges might reinforce the links of border regions to rest of the country. In Yanbian, the economic contacts with the domestic economy were strengthened when the local economy grew with the help of transnational ethnic resources. As the expanding economic exchanges created more employment and well-being, the loyalty of the Koreans toward China was re-consolidated. This development was partly aided by the disillusionment of Yanbian Koreans with their membership in South Korean society.

These findings also support the proposition that along with China's rise, its ethnic minorities can be proud of their Chinese citizenship. These free and orderly transnational exchanges could be expected to not only improve the relations between ethnic minorities and the centre, but also to support the local economic development and hence make ethnic minorities more contented with China. An emerging self-secure China should be able to trust its ethnic minorities and thereby allow a relaxed flow of transnational economic activities.

The Shifting Position of Ethnic Minorities in China's Development Project

The economic opportunities provided for ethnic minorities in China have been restricted for several reasons, of which the political sensitivity is just one. In addition to geographic reasons, domestic and foreign policy considerations, state-sanctioned development plans, local/regional traditions, and the stereotypes attached to ethnic minorities, have all defined certain limits to the scope of their economic manoeuvre. The opening up of China's borders allowed ethnic minorities to expand their range of the development opportunities, and the availability of not just new opportunities and resources, but also new frames of reference, in which to reconsider chances for social advancement and no longer with the stigma of an inferior "little-brother" nationality. While all these restraints continued to still influence the economic opportunities of ethnic minorities, their economic position has nevertheless

changed, which is clearly highlighted by the results of this study along with the economic challenges for ethnic minorities, too.

Yet, despite these changes, as shown in the study by Elena Barabantseva, the state discourse still depicts ethnic minorities in terms of immobility and traditions contradictorily.⁷⁰⁵ The extent of this discrepancy between the national-level political discourse as opposed to the actual conditions, becomes evident in this study. In Yanbian, mobile Koreans have provided an important impetus for modernization. The Korean ethnic minority has helped to transfer investments to Yanbian, and they paved the way for labour export. From this, they were able to achieve a higher standard of living than the Han Chinese, who then followed the "Korean way to affluence" by utilizing Korean migration channels and thereby increase their incomes. Further, with regard to investments, the ethnic Koreans actively helped the economic bureaucrats - often themselves Han Chinese - to create links with foreign Korean businesspeople and to reach investment deals. Ethnic Koreans have also proved to be capable entrepreneurs, even though their companies have mainly remained small in scale. Overall, they have had a significant and multifaceted impact on the local economic development.

The creative utilization of transnational ethnic capital was also constrained by the inflexible system of the planned economy and the prevailing attitude that low-educated migrants were incapable of being entrepreneurs. Although the Yanbian government was successful in attracting ethnic Korean investments, the local economic plans lacked an effective interface with a wider ethnically-based development potential. This arose from local government preoccupied with the fulfillment of the state-sanctioned development targets on the basis of the prevalent priorities and preferences of Northeast China. Eventually, the national and regional development strategies provided incentives for the prefectural government to launch new policies which enabled the injection of a broader range of transnational capital into Yanbian. An inflexible top-to-down manner of managing local affairs prevailed there.

The question then arises, do these attempts benefit the ethnic minorities themselves, and are the "activators" the main beneficiaries of the liaison activities? In altruistic terms, the mobilization of transnational ethnic communities should include a commitment to the

⁷⁰⁵ Barabantseva 2005.

economic development of the domestic members of the community, on their own premises. Yet, transnationalism from above is inherently for the benefit of the elite. The ties were mobilized in order to fulfill the state-sanctioned development plans and in this way it helped the elite to maintain its position. In Yanbian, one part of the Korean community was an inseparable part of the elite and these activities certainly helped to reinforce their positions. However, the ordinary Koreans also benefited from the work to some extent, for example, in the form of new employment positions both in Yanbian and abroad.

Yet, the neglect of the development potential embedded in transnational ties of ethnic minorities leaves important resources untapped. These resources have the potential to reduce the economic disparity between the coastal and frontier regions. Although Yanbian is exceptional among China's autonomous areas, due to its links with the wealthy South Korea, its example still provides a model to follow. However, although the ethnic transnational resources may not provide significant investments and trade opportunities in all cases, they can still be significant as a critical impetus for the economic development of the ethnic minority regions. Therefore, an appreciation of the small-scale ethnic resources would also aid the integration of ethnic minorities into China's modernization program, one in which many of them currently have only a marginalized position. As such, it becomes quite clear, that a genuine attempt to find resonance in a transnationalism from above and below in regions inhabited by ethnic minorities, would undoubtedly be beneficial for both the economic development and the social stability of China's border regions.

Tasks for the Future

This study has explored transnational ethnic capital transfers of just one ethnic minority. Additional case studies would enable comparisons, generalizations and theory-building. Studies on the practices and policies of other autonomous prefectures, or lower level governments would also provide additional material for comparison. The methodological tools applied in this study have proved useful, but they can still be improved upon.

Another issue which this study has observed, but been unable to investigate further, is the "spill over" of the benefits of ethnic transnational communities over its ethnic boundaries, for

example, the mobilization of Korean transnational capital generated benefits for the Han Chinese, too. Moreover, the Han Chinese were able to use the Korean transnational ethnic channels. The actual mechanics of the capital flows over the ethnic boundaries would further help to better understand the development impact of transnational ethnic capital transfers.

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Abbreviations:

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INTERVIEWS

Government officials:

National level: 1 interview (Ethnic Affairs Commission)

Yanbian:

Prefecture level:

Department of Commerce (3 interviews), Department of Labour and Social Security (3 interviews), Economy and Reform Commission (2 interviews), Foreign Trade Commission (1 interview), Ethnic Affairs Commission (1 interview), Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (1 interview), United Front Department of the Party (1 interview), Women's Federation (1 interview), Foreign Affairs Office (1 interview).

Sub-prefecture level:

Hunchun (2 interviews), Longjing (4 interviews), Tumen (1 interview).

Fujian, Xiamen:

Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (1 interview).

Members of Associations:

Yanbian: 4 interviews.

Businessmen:

Yanbian: 1 interviews.

Researchers:

Beijing: 12 interviews (CASS: Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Institute of Ethnic Literature).

Yanbian: 9 interviews (CASS, Yanbian University).

8. LIST OF SELECTED CHINESE TERMS

baoguo shengyi 包裹生意
banguan banmin 半官半民
bianjing jingji hezuo qu 边境经济合作区
bianjiang shaoshu minzu guoji gonggong guanxi 边疆少数民族国际公共关系
bianjiang shaoshu minzu minjian waijiao 边疆少数民族民间外交
bianmin hushi 边民互市
bianyuan diqu 边远地区
caizhengzhan 财政站
chaoqiao 朝侨
chongpo jinqu 冲破禁区
chuangkou gongsi 窗口公司
chuguore 出国热
di er guxiang 第二故乡
difang maoyi 地方贸易
fada de bianjiang jinhai sheng 发达的边疆近海省
fan shentou lingdao xiaozu 反渗透领导小组
gangwei mubiao zerenzhi 岗位目标责任制
gezhong huo nazhong guanxi 各种或那种关系
guiqiao 归侨
guojisi 国际司
guomin yishi 国民意识
guowai chaoxianren 国外朝鲜人
guowai zangbao 国外藏胞
gutuxingui 故土新归
haiwai minzu lianyi gongzuo 海外民族联谊工作
haiwai shaoshu minzu huaren 海外少数民族华人
heping kuaju 和平跨居
huaqiao 华侨
huaren 华人
jiedaiban 接待办
kou'an maoyi 口岸贸易
kuaguo minzu 跨国民族
kuaguo shequn 跨国社群
kuajie huodong 跨界活动
kuajie minzu 跨界民族
kuajie minzu wenti 跨界民族问题
kuajie shenghuo 跨界生活
kuajing minzu 跨境民族
lianbao zeren zhi 联保责任制
lianbao zhidu 联保制度
liangge jidi jizhi 两个基地机制
lüyue baozhengjin 履约保证金

mingan diqu 敏感地区
minjian waijiao 民间外交
minsu fengqing 民俗风情
minzu wenti 民族问题
minzu kuajie wenti 民族跨界问题
Minwei 民委
minzu de ziwo yishi 民族的自我意识
minzu maoyi 民族贸易
minzu waishi gongzuo 民族外事工作
Qiaoban 侨办
qiaobao 侨胞
qiaojuan 侨眷
qiaowu 侨务
qiaoxiang 侨乡
qinshu xueyuan 亲属血缘
renji guanxi 人际关系
renmin 人民
san bu 三不
sanju minzu 散居民族
shaoshu minzu huaqiao huaren 少数民族华侨华人
shaoshu minzu tongbao 少数民族同胞
shuangzhong kaifang 双种开放
suzhi 素质
tanqin dai xiangmu, tongxin yin xiangmu 探亲带项目通信引项目
tongzu 同族
waishisi 外事司
wenyi datai - jingmao changxi 文艺搭台 经贸唱戏
xiangzhen laodong fuwuzhan 乡镇劳动服务站
xianmin houguan 先民后官
xiao'e maoyi 小额贸易
xiaokang shehui 小康社会
Xibu dakaifa 西部大开发
Xinjiang shengchan jianshe bingtuan 新疆生产建设兵团
xin yimin 新移民
yanbian kaifang chengshi 沿边开放城市
yiren weiben 以人为本
yizhong ganqing 一种感情
youhao wanglai guanxi 友好往来关系
zhengfu gongzuo baogao 政府工作报告
zhengfu gongzuo renwu 政府工作任务
zhengfu zhuyao renwu 政府主要任务
zhengjing fenli 正经分离
Zhengxie 政协
Zhongguo tese chaoxianzu wenhua 中国特色朝鲜族文化
zonghe peitao gaige shidian lianxi chengshi 综合配套改革试点联系城市
zouchuqu qingjinlai 走出去请进来
zuqun 族群