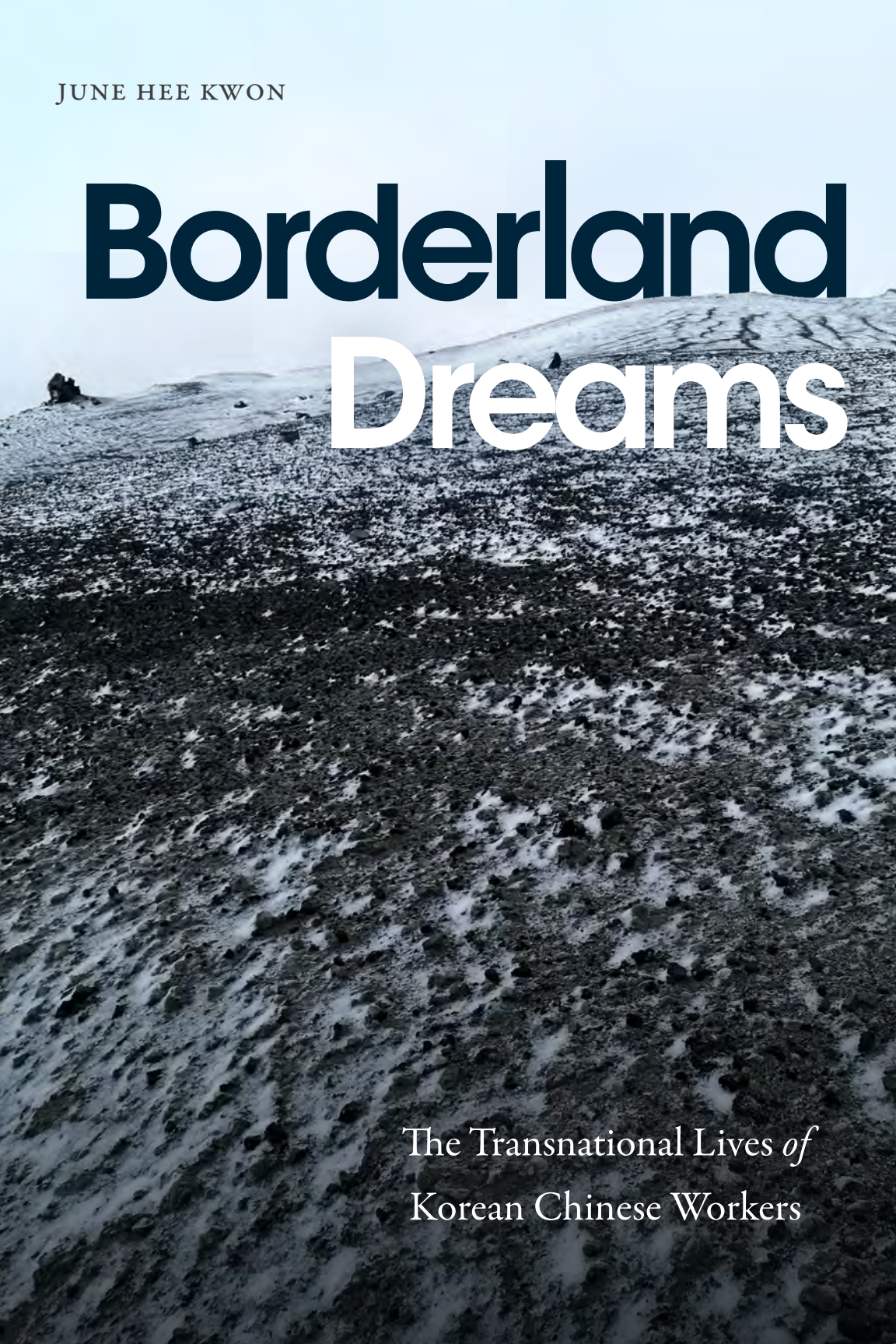
JUNE HEE KWON

Borderland Dreams



The Transnational Lives *of* Korean Chinese Workers

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To my parents

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Winds of Migration

> I am a windflower floating without direction. I have been moving back and forth, not staying between where the wind is coming from and where the wind is going. I have flown here and there, continuously remembering and forgetting, blaming and missing the other world. I belong to both worlds, while at the same time I escape from both worlds. Who am I, the one who has flown all around? I am the wind.
> —XU LIANSHUN, *Paramkkot* (The windflower)

On a hot July day in 2013, Sunhua and Taebong, a married Korean Chinese couple in their early forties, invited me to the opening party for their restaurant in Yanji, the capital of Yanbian, the Korean Chinese Autonomous Prefecture in northeast China that borders North Korea. Sunhua is the youngest of five daughters, all of whom (and all of whose husbands) have pursued the "Korean dream": leaving China and working in South Korea as transnational migrant workers, a practice that began in the early 1990s. Sunhua's husband, Taebong, had also gone to South Korea, following his hometown friends; they had all been swept up in what is known as the "Korean Wind" (*han'guk param* in Korean)—a nickname for the collective passion in Yanbian for the Korean dream. Sunhua and Taebong had met in South Korea and married there, and they had a five-year-old daughter. After fifteen years of working in South Korea, they had decided to come back to Yanbian, their hometown, and fulfill Taebong's longtime ambition: opening a restaurant. At the opening party, Taebong told me: "I could not live as a *dagong* ["manual laborer" in Chinese] working under South Koreans anymore. I am getting older. I want to have a more settled life. Most of all, I wanted to return to Yanbian for my daughter's education."[1] Taebong now considered himself an entrepreneur, someone who could hire and fire employees and run his own restaurant—the opposite of his status in South Korea.

On my first visit to the restaurant after the opening, Sunhua and Taebong were still very excited about their new business, which had enjoyed gradual but steady growth. Within a few months, however, I heard from them that the restaurant business had been a bit too "up and down" and could not give them the stable income that they needed to maintain their household, given the skyrocketing cost of living in Yanbian. As a result, they had decided that Sunhua would remain in Yanbian, running a scaled-down restaurant business and taking care of their daughter, while Taebong went back to work in a South Korean printing factory to secure a reliable salary—even though he had badly wanted to break out of the cycle of moving back and forth between China and South Korea as a *dagong*. In other words, Sunhua would stay in China in order to take advantage of the rising Chinese economy (the "Chinese dream"), while Taebong continued to pursue the Korean dream. This couple has, for the time being, settled on a diversified life strategy; they are now juggling both the Chinese dream and the Korean dream—or, as I call them, "borderland dreams."

This book examines this re/interpretation of the Korean dream that has haunted Korean Chinese and the region of Yanbian for the past three decades. It takes as its subject the collective craze for exodus to the homeland, South Korea, which, prior to the 1990s, had been long forbidden and branded as an "enemy homeland."[2] This collective haunting has been expressed in a common saying: "Everybody [any able body] who can walk is gone with the Korean Wind" (*köl ŭl su it nŭn saram ŭn Han'guke da katta* in Korean). Another common saying goes, "Whenever even two people get together, there is talk about South Korea." The Korean Wind has been indeed everywhere: imagined, spoken of, and acted on, in the context of financial successes and failures, fake (and real) marriages, new apartments and new businesses, thriving or disintegrating families. It has been analyzed and circulated via newspapers, academic journals, literary writings, and blogs, as well as in everyday talk. All this talk reflects widespread aspiration, yearning, and pride. It also hints at concerns and critiques about the sudden affluence that has accompanied the Korean Wind, about a prevailing attitude of obsessive materialism, and about the collapse of the Korean Chinese ethnic community and sustained family structure.

Korean Chinese have long believed labor migration to South Korea to be the most effective and powerful means of breaking the cycle they have been caught up in as farmers and workers in a rapidly privatizing China. In the early 1990s, the Korean dream was first visualized in Yanbian discourse

as the "ten-thousand-yuan household" (*manwŏnho* in Korean), whose members went to South Korea, made 10,000 yuan (an amount that symbolized "a lot of money" at the time in China) in a short period of time, and then built a fancy new house with this "Korean money." The sudden wealth earned by the first migrant laborers in South Korea was envied and idolized by their neighbors, and it fed the aspirations of the Korean dream. These beliefs have led 726,000 Korean Chinese (out of around two million Korean Chinese living in China, mainly in the northeast) to emigrate to South Korea for work. According to recent statistics (as of 2020), Korean Chinese are the largest migrant group in South Korea.

The Korean Wind has brought significant changes to the lives of Korean Chinese immigrants over the last three decades. Yet it has also left deep marks on those who do not actually migrate, as well as on the place that is left behind—Yanbian. There are those who are waiting for someone's return, those who rely on money sent from South Korea, those who are waiting to migrate themselves, and those who take over the houses, lands, and jobs left vacant by migrants. Despite the high numbers of departing Korean Chinese, Yanbian has not been left empty by the Korean Wind, as those who have gone have left behind families, and new people have also migrated to Yanbian to fill the void the Korean Chinese emigrants have left. Under the influential, transformative power of the Korean Wind, Yanbian has become a migration-dominated borderland, subject to transnational rhythms of life and transnational flows of money.

What, then, has made this massive and persistent migratory craze possible over the past three decades? What established Korean Chinese as suitable migrant workers in the China-to-South Korea transnational labor market? What are the means of creating (or sometimes destroying) the transnational relationship between those who remain and those who go—the living and the leaving—in an environment where much of the population has gone with the Korean Wind? And what is (or will be) the afterlife of these Korean dreams?

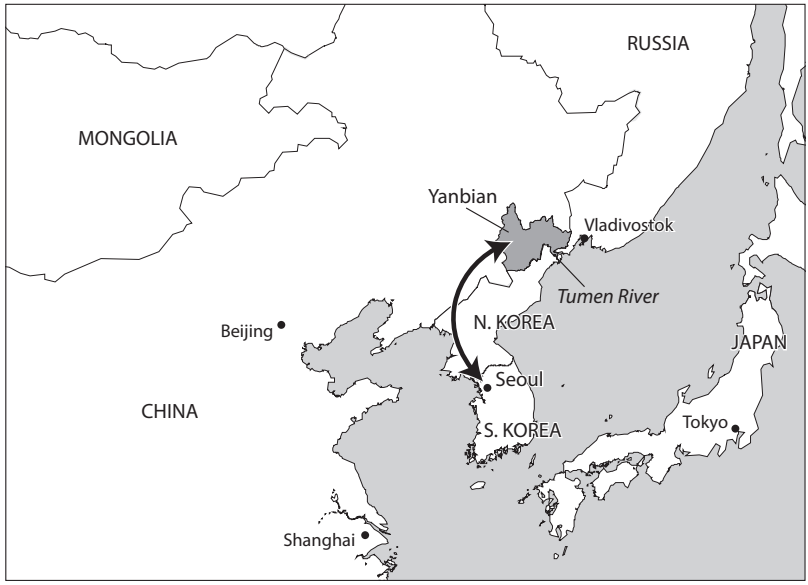
Using bodies, money, and time as key ethnographic lenses through which to understand the persistent aspirations of labor migrants and everyone connected to them, this book analyzes the political economy of the enthusiasm fueling labor migration to South Korea, a migration that has formed Korean Chinese into a transnational ethnic working class. My argument is that the Korean dream is not only a collective myth that provoked individual anticipation of a better life, in part as a response to rapid privatization in China, but also a reflection of the new material realities that

sprang from the intersection between post-socialist China and post–Cold War South Korea. In other words, the Korean Wind ushered in a unique era of transnational money and time between China and South Korea, leading to the ethnicization of Korean Chinese working bodies.

But this book also examines a new social imperative that has appeared, one that may break the cycle of the dominant Korean dream—a discourse urging Korean Chinese to stop working for and under South Korean employers and capital and to reembrace life in rapidly thriving Yanbian, as China emerges as a site for new economic opportunities. As seen in Sunhua and Taebong's story, which opens this introduction, Korean Chinese are struggling with competing and contentious dreams, the Korean dream and the Chinese dream. Moreover, in order to understand Korean Chinese migration, which appears predominantly transnational in the form of the Korean Wind, we also need to take a close look at all the migratory paths being followed on multiple scales (see chapter 5): from the countryside to the city, from small cities to larger cities, from cities in Yanbian to other parts of China—and many other migratory paths, multiplying the life choices beyond the Korean dream. Unraveling the various afterlives and reinterpretations of the Korean dream, we can see that the dream does not stand still but moves and changes. And sometimes dreams stop being dreams altogether. This book captures this complex array of borderland dreams: geopolitically sensitive and ethnically specific aspirations that are entangled with the new post–Korean Wind moment and buoyed by the hope of pursuing the Chinese dream and the Korean dream at the same time.

Gone with the Korean Wind

There are around two million Korean Chinese living in China nationwide, mostly concentrated in the northeastern provinces of Jilin, Liaoning, and Heilongjiang. Approximately 700,000 of them, 35 percent of the total, live in the borderland of Yanbian, an autonomous prefecture in southeastern Jilin province. The Korean Chinese, whose ancestors crossed the Tumen River from the Korean peninsula in search of better farming lands beginning in the late nineteenth century, are an ethnic minority group with Chinese nationality. Later, some Koreans moved to Manchuria to escape from poverty that was exacerbated by Japanese imperialism, and some were forced to move by Japanese plans for transplanting populations—what Hyun Ok Park calls "territorial osmosis" (H. O. Park 2005).[3] In addi-



Map I.1 Map showing the transnational commute between Yanbian, China, and South Korea.

tion, Koreans who opposed Japanese oppression moved to Manchuria in order to support the independence movement from relative safety outside Korea.

Korean Chinese in Yanbian are mostly the descendants of migrants from the northern part of Korea (Hamgyŏng-bukto, the northeast region of contemporary North Korea) who crossed over in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most Korean Chinese in Yanbian speak a dialect similar to that of Hamgyŏng-bukto, which is right across the river, and they maintain the regional food culture and housing style. After the new China was established in 1949 and Yanbian was designated the Korean Chinese Autonomous Prefecture in 1952, these descendants of Korean migrants became Chinese nationals, "proud" to be one of fifty-five ethnic minorities officially recognized by the Chinese government.[4] Under the exigencies of Cold War politics, however, Korean Chinese were forbidden to contact or claim kinship ties to either of the two Koreas, especially South Korea, which was condemned as a hotbed of "devil capitalism" and "a bastard of imperial America" (*mi chabonjuŭi saekki* in Korean).[5]

Things dramatically changed, however, as China and South Korea normalized diplomatic relations in 1992 and Cold War hostilities faded

away. Korean Chinese have since developed a close relationship with South Korea. They first recovered long-lost cultural and familial ties that had been forbidden under Cold War politics; soon after, Korean Chinese were recognized as "overseas Koreans," or ethnic compatriots (*tongp'o* in Korean), by the South Korean government (see chapters 2 and 3), and became persistent, even obsessive labor migrants, driven by the vast income gap between China and South Korea. The Korean Wind—with forces connecting Yanbian to South Korea, from family reunions to the labor market—has dominated the affect, materiality, and futurity of Korean Chinese across Yanbian, which I elucidate throughout the book.

The act of "going with the Korean Wind" has become widely accepted as an inevitable life phase for most Korean Chinese, marking a rapid cultural, economic, and political transition in Yanbian. Here, being "gone" does not simply mean to disappear or leave for South Korea or some other foreign country. Rather, it signifies a condition of living, of moving back and forth, a condition to which many Korean Chinese have become accustomed as a deep and essential part of their lives. However, some Korean Chinese intellectuals, journalists, and social critics consider the ubiquitous phenomenon of being gone as a pathological force that poses an ethnic crisis—a symptom of a spreading social "disease" that manifests in high divorce rates, deficiencies in childcare, juvenile delinquency, and extravagant spending. Critics of the Korean Wind believe that these factors threaten the stability of Yanbian's ethnic community by "contaminating" the consciousness of Korean Chinese with capitalism, creating within them a relentless desire to pursue "money-money-money" (*don-don-don* in Korean). Indeed, there is a tacit agreement that nobody is really immune to materialistic "contamination" by "Korean water" (*Han'guk mul* in Korean) since the money-money-money spirit has given rise to great economic achievement, dramatic urbanization, and rising aspirations—not only on the individual household level but also across and beyond the Korean Chinese community, and in Yanbian at large.

In this turbulent context, the concept of "wind" (*param* in Korean) connotes not only a fashion or temporary collective craze for migration but also the shifting politico-economic circumstances of specific eras—vernacularly circulated periodizations such as the North Korean Wind, the Soviet Wind, and the South Korean Wind. These winds are based on collective migrations, which occurred in accordance with the changing regional political economy between China, North Korea, Russia, and South Korea, as Korean Chinese have regained the freedom of mobility

in the era of post–Cold War globalization and post-socialist China. In a more metaphorical sense, these winds can be understood as a symbol for the floating subjectivity of Korean Chinese as rootless, displaced, nomadic subjects, without clear sense of belonging to any one location—as in the passage from the Korean Chinese writer Xu Lianshun's novel quoted at the beginning of this introduction. The Korean *param* indicates the flow of air. But it also entails the fashions and collective obsessions shared by a society during a certain period of time. In the latter sense, *param* can cause people to "flow" in a certain direction, and sometimes people can get lost within the flow. Thus, *param* structures a vague but strong feeling of a specific moment in a given place, as well as creating a sense of a shared temporality (a periodization) that influences the attitudes and actions of contemporaries. For the last thirty years, the Korean Wind has been at once a condition of hope for the future and a destructive power that threatens to dissolve old ties. The Korean Wind is thus not only a material source of rapid economic betterment and modern life, but also a mythical medium through which Korean Chinese can articulate their relationships to the past and the future, politics and economy, socialism and capitalism. Korean Chinese have re/interpreted their Korean dreams—staging Yanbian as an ethnic borderland distinctive from, but integrated into, the transnational economy.

Winds of Migration

Yanbian's urbanization began with the end of the political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, when Deng Xiaoping announced economic reforms in December 1978. This proclamation foresaw three stages of development: first, to end hunger and ensure food security (温饱 *wenbao*) from 1980 to 1990; second, to spread "decent affluence" (小康 *xiaokang*) throughout the whole population, from 1990 to 2000; and third, to achieve a socialist market economy through the mid-twenty-first century. Pragmatism was vital to this economic reform, as captured in the expression, "It does not matter whether the cat is black or white as long as it catches the mouse" (*baimao heimao lun* in Chinese). The reforms also allowed or even encouraged the enrichment of particular groups, admitting market competition and consequential social inequality as an inevitable rite of passage. Although Deng made this declaration in 1978, it took time for the reform policies to reach Yanbian and be put into practice. In the

early 1980s, people in Yanbian were still confused about what it meant to take part in a market economy or to engage in profit making. During this time, privatization or selling was still officially forbidden, although it was growing gradually in secret. Due to Yanbian's geographical marginality as an ethnic enclave, its development has often been overlooked or deferred by the central government. Yet as Yanbian Korean Chinese began to experience the rise of a market economy, the markets helped to "open" their eyes through contact with the external world, including long-distance business trips to larger Chinese cities. Interaction with the world at large through travel generated an increased flow of things, people, and habits both into and out of Yanbian. This emergence and demise of collective fashions and yearnings for new or foreign experiences, opportunities, and goods can be understood in terms of four distinct phases, or winds.

The Market Wind (*Sijang Param*)

Beginning in the early 1980s, farmland was redistributed from collectives to individual families. This new system of production and distribution in the countryside encouraged farmers to increase their productivity and start selling surpluses on the market. The idea of profit making rapidly expanded to urbanites, and the consequent rise in all sorts of buying and selling caused Yanbian to be gradually connected to the external world.[6] While researching the history of markets in Yanbian, I attended a summer picnic organized by the Association of the Old (*Noin Hyŏphoe* in Korean). The association holds regular activities, such as dancing, singing, and hiking, for Korean Chinese retirees. At this picnic, I met several former businesspeople who in the late 1980s and early 1990s had taken part in what was known as *xiahai* ("the plunge into the ocean" in Chinese)—that is, the wave of private profit-making business activities. I talked at length with one of them, Mr. Hong, who was considered one of the most successful; he had reacted swiftly to the economic reforms and gained an advantage over his competitors.

In his late sixties, Mr. Hong had once worked for the post office in Yanji. In the early 1980s, he noticed some of his neighbors and other farmers selling simple things—tofu, sunflower seeds, tobacco—on the street and making profits, which began to bring in more income than their regular salaries. Their surreptitious activity made Mr. Hong interested in sell-

ing something. His wife, a factory worker, was also a talented cook and especially good at making *mahua* (a fried-dough snack with a twisted shape, popular in China). He and his wife soon started selling *mahua* as their secondary job, setting up a stand on a busy street corner. Since *mahua* was considered a morning food, they had to get up at 3 a.m. to prepare to start selling at 6 a.m. The *mahua* would be sold out by 7 a.m. Mr. Hong then would go to the post office for his regular job. As the business quickly picked up beyond their expectations, they had to prepare even more ingredients for more sales and started getting up at 2 a.m. As Mr. Hong described it: "We were physically tired, but that extra cash income made us forget about the exhaustion. It was much more than our combined incomes—more than four times."

He heard at one point that the local government would prohibit street vendors for the sake of preserving the city landscape. But he and his wife were not overly worried because they were not the only vendors. People—both Han Chinese and Korean Chinese—still sold things on the street regardless of the local government's ban. After realizing that the regulations were ineffective and the vendors' numbers were increasing by the day, the local government eventually decided to establish an "official market." The government acted as a landlord, selling or renting booths to individual sellers. Mr. Hong and his wife started by renting a booth in the new market, but soon their successful business allowed them to buy a booth. And they became the owners of a restaurant—*laoban* ("an owner of business" in Chinese).

The opening of this official market was a major event, one that dramatically transformed perspectives on money, profits, markets, and the larger world. In 1985, after the Yanji West Market (*Sŏsijang* in Korean) opened as the first and largest market in Yanbian, smaller cities—Longjing, Tumen, and Helong—also opened public markets that allowed sellers to run their own businesses as *laoban* within the markets. Mr. Hong's story is one of the numerous examples that can help us understand the growing mood of privatization at the time. He found a good niche in the marketplace by capitalizing on the talent of his wife. He also realized that the harder he worked, the more money he could make, in contrast to the collective farm and rigid socialist production system. Excitement about the emerging market and the profits it promised spread rapidly and widely. Whenever I interviewed businesspeople and government officials in their fifties or older, including the retired businesspeople I met at the picnic, they recollected the 1980s as a time of new energy, new experiences, and new ideas.

This was an exciting moment for Korean Chinese who were used to living in an insular ethnic zone.

Such eye-opening experiences occurred more frequently in businesses that required long-distance trips. While Mr. Hong's restaurant business was local, with not much need for travel, those who engaged in trading needed to buy products in larger cities. Until this time, most of these traders had never left Yanbian. When I talked to shopkeepers and former peddlers, at the heart of their memories of this time lay the fear and excitement they felt about making their first long-distance trips to other Chinese cities. Given the marginalized location of Yanbian in China, shopkeepers and purchasing agents (*caigouyuan* in Chinese) had to go to larger cities in order to buy new products, which they then carried back to Yanbian to sell in their stores.[7]

They had to repeat this cycle many times because Yanbian's economy was not big enough to create a high demand for consumer products. They took trains to closer cities in northeast China, such as Shenyang or Harbin—a three- to four-day round trip. But when they traveled to more commercialized southern cities, such as Shanghai or Guangzhou, it could take as many as three days just to get there because of the slow trains back then. The merchants remembered these trips as long, exhausting, and risky. Since they had to make purchases with cash, they were frequently the target of robbers. In order to protect themselves from being attacked, and to brighten up the long, dull trips, they took to traveling in small groups of three or four. Ms. Li, one of the Korean Chinese ladies I met at the picnic and a current seller in the Yanji West Market, said to me, "Whenever I took a trip, I felt that my eyes were opened to the bigger world and newer things. I learned how to do business in 'real' China with 'real' Chinese."

The rise of the market economy not only enabled goods to circulate but also transformed Korean Chinese culture. The business trips had a dual impact. They helped Korean Chinese who had grown up in a parochial ethnic enclave both to see a larger world and to realize more fully their status as an ethnic minority—as people who often spoke no fluent Chinese and had no knowledge of "real" China or Chinese culture (see chapter 5). As these ethnic subjects came face to face with the external world (*Oechi* in Korean) in the context of the market economy, they began to extend their geographical imagination and scope of their mobility beyond China to North Korea and the Soviet Union. North Korea, in particular, came to the fore as the first transnational business partner for Yanbian Korean Chinese due to geographical proximity, linguistic similarity, and kinship connectivity.

The North Korean Wind (*Pukchosŏn Param*)

Beginning in the mid-1980s, business travel expanded to North Korea. I heard about a variety of business experience with North Korea from Korean Chinese migrant workers whom I met both in South Korea and in Yanbian. The many stories they had to tell provide evidence of common business practices among Korean Chinese in the mid-1980s. Despite the geographical adjacency between Yanbian and North Korea, the business relationship between them had been limited for decades by political circumstances. Even though China and North Korea had been on reciprocal terms as neighboring socialist states, the diplomatic relationship became hostile during the Cultural Revolution because Kim Il Sung, the leader of North Korea, was critical of Mao's political strategies. Any possible tie to North Korea—familial, economic, or political—could be a pretext for political persecution. In order to avoid the emotional, political, and physical traumas connected to politics, Korean Chinese had to prove how faithful they were to China, and how fully Chinese they had become, by attenuating their ethnic identity. Yet as political tensions gradually eased in the mid-1980s, Korean Chinese were allowed to visit their families back in North Korea with less political burden. Some of them began to carry Chinese industrial products to exchange for North Korean seafood, which was known to be of high quality. Other Korean Chinese began to peddle their goods in North Korean markets at a high rate of profit, staying in North Korea for several days or weeks.[8]

One of these Korean Chinese migrant workers, Ms. Kang, was in her late fifties when I met her in Seoul in 2009. She told me about her trading experience in North Korea. She used to work in a furniture factory in Yanbian. But as the factory began to decline, she started her own business, selling fruit in the market. In addition, she began going to North Korea for extra income in the early 1990s.

> I carried as much stuff as I could all the way to North Korea. It was so heavy that my back and arms felt like they were going to break. Once I got there, I had to rely on a North Korean mediator who guided me to a large market that opened once a week. I put my products on sale there. There were a lot of thieves in the market. I got robbed once. It was very stressful to be alert all the time. Sometimes, I just passed the products on to the mediator and received seafood in exchange, right on the spot. The money I could earn from them was not bad—better than several months of salary at my factory.

1.1 Dried cod from North Korea in the Yanji West Market, Yanbian, China, 2016. Photo by the author.

However, the trade with North Korea did not last long. Even though it became a popular extra source of income among farmers and factory workers, there were inherent limits. First, the profit margin could not increase because the Yanbian merchants could only carry a certain amount of goods to North Korea on each trip. Given that public transportation across the border was not reliable, the Korean Chinese business travelers had to hire personal vehicles to transport them and their goods to North Korea. They knew that the more they carried, the more they could sell and earn, because there was always high demand for Chinese products in North Korea. The Korean Chinese, who were individual street merchants and shopkeepers and not agents for large firms, could not amass much capital through business with North Korea. They realized that they were unable to turn their small-scale trading into big businesses. Most impor-

tantly, since Korean Chinese were unfamiliar with the market situation in North Korea, they had to rely on North Korean mediators, who were often distant relatives or newly minted business partners that they did not know well. It was not unusual for these mediators to turn out to be swindlers. Sometimes North Korean thieves robbed Korean Chinese merchants. In addition, since market regulations in North Korea—rules on where and when one was allowed to sell what to whom—were tight and subject to arbitrary changes, it was not easy for Korean Chinese to do business in the country. Under these high-risk, low-trust conditions, Korean Chinese merchants sometimes went bankrupt, even when their business had shown signs of success. The risky, unpredictable market conditions quickly exhausted Korean Chinese merchants, and the North Korean Wind began to flag. Then the Soviet Wind blew into Yanbian in the early 1990s.

The Soviet Wind (*Ssoryŏn Param*)

As China and the Soviet Union normalized diplomatic relations in 1991, many Chinese left for the former Soviet territories in order to introduce Chinese industrial products into suddenly open markets. In stark contrast to the small-scale, short-term, barter-style trade in North Korea, the Russian market was better organized and more profitable.[9] Since Soviet industrial development had been focused on heavy industry, the products of so-called light industry such as clothes, shoes, and daily goods were often scarce in Russia. In targeting this niche market, some Korean Chinese took long trips to Moscow or Ukraine, but the majority of Korean Chinese dealers left for the Russian Far East because it bordered northeast China—in particular, the eastern parts of Jilin and Heilongjiang. The items for sale were diverse, but these merchants mostly concentrated on selling clothes and shoes, which were in high demand in Russia.[10] The merchants dealt with a much wider range of products and often stayed for years—much longer than most Korean Chinese merchants stayed in North Korea.

Most of the merchants with experience in North Korea eventually went to Russia for business too. According to many I spoke with, business in Russia was organized for self-protection and profit-maximization; it was also known to be an extremely dangerous place to do business. It was said that "when people went to Russia for business, they put their lives on the line." I was told that Russian gangsters specifically targeted

Chinese merchants because they were believed to carry large amounts of cash. However, the high profit margins seemed to outweigh the fear and anxiety, and they kept the Soviet Wind blowing through Yanbian in the early 1990s.

The Soviet Wind seemed to dovetail with economic reform in China. Sometimes, government work units encouraged their workers to go to Russia by providing them with official vacations to do so—it was implicit but institutionalized support from the work units. Mr. Kim Hakman, in his early seventies, used to be the vice mayor of a Yanbian city. He recalled the Soviet Wind:

> When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, they needed many things. At that time, we Korean Chinese thought that it was a great opportunity to make money. Thus, in our work unit we encouraged our workers to take temporary vacations and do whatever they could to make money. They were allowed to return to the work unit within a couple of years, after making decent money. Since I was fairly high ranked in the city government, I could not stay away on my own business like that. But I did go to the Soviet Union a couple of times in 1991. I was very impressed with their higher level of "civilization" (*munmyŏng* in Korean) and development compared to China at that time. But doing business there was extremely dangerous. My brother-in-law, my wife's brother, went to the Soviet Union and made a lot of money. But Russian gangsters stabbed him. He was almost killed. Even with that risk, people went there until the early 1990s because of the profits they could make.

In response to the high risk, the merchants had to develop new methods to protect themselves. Mr. Kim and other former merchants who traded in Russia detailed what they did: before they left, they organized a team of Korean Chinese merchants doing business in Russia, or sometimes they formed a partnership with strangers after they got there. They also engaged in fake marriages in order to appear as if they were operating as a family, rather than as individual merchants. Many former merchants said that before they left for Russia or began to do business there, they would hold a wedding ceremony with another merchant. But the "couples" were not supposed to ask about each other's personal information, including their real names. The merchants lived under assumed identities throughout the period of their business in Russia. From the stories they told, it appears that there was a division of labor by gender. Women tended to

take care of the store, while men were in charge of purchasing products from China and carrying them to Russia. In order to address the security issue, sometimes two couples joined together as business partners. These "married" merchants lived together as if they were a real couple for the common goal of safety. Sometimes they developed feelings for each other and engaged in actual love affairs. But the "official" agreement was that they were to keep up the fake couple relationship between themselves and would not meet again after they returned to China. Despite such agreements, the Soviet Wind posed a challenge to normative couples and family relationships among Korean Chinese merchants, with the embedded practice of "fake coupling" as a rite of passage. It was performed for business interests and self-protection, but it also evolved into a way of life, which led to actual affairs and increased divorces in Yanbian.

When I was collecting memories related to the Soviet Wind from various former Korean Chinese merchants, I could sense the anxiety and excitement of informants in recalling that time. The risk was high. The stakes were high. The potential benefit was high. It was the sort of chance that might come only once in a lifetime. But the Russian trade seemed to be so unpredictable that most merchants could not make more than one or two attempts unless they were able to put together a solid, well-organized support group—a network to provide financial help, security, and social support. In the end, the former merchants said it was difficult to maintain their businesses without support from gangster groups for security. Even though Korean Chinese merchants retain good memories of Russia as a developed and "civilized" Western country, Russia proved to be "too foreign" for them to live there for very long—not to mention that they found the language hard to master. The Soviet Wind peaked in the early 1990s, stimulating a flow of Korean Chinese merchants to Russia and bringing in large sums of Russian money. But it rapidly faded and was replaced with the Korean Wind after China normalized diplomatic relations with South Korea in 1992.

The South Korean Wind (*Han'guk Param*)

The diplomatic normalization between China and South Korea in 1992 was an epochal event for the Korean Chinese community in China, in the sense that it rejuvenated kinship ties forgotten and forbidden under

Cold War politics and created new population flows. South Koreans came to China to find new business partners and cheaper labor.[11] Meanwhile, Korean Chinese moved to South Korea to serve as cheaper labor. Korean Chinese often recalled their first encounter with South Korea as an experience of overwhelming anxiety and nervousness about their long-forbidden "home" country and impending reunions with long-lost family. The kinship reunions that the South Korean government began in the late 1980s as a humanitarian gesture became a channel for Korean Chinese to visit South Korea. The South Korean government issued "kinship visit visas" to Korean Chinese, which triggered an increased flow of Korean Chinese migration later in the 1990s. Many Korean Chinese brought Chinese medicine in bulk to South Korea, partially as gifts for relatives and partially to sell for profit. At the heart of stories I was told about traveling to South Korea was always the amount of money that could be made in several months by selling Chinese medicine. Through these repeated trips, South Korea emerged as a profitable marketplace for Korean Chinese. This sudden material achievement ignited a type of fantasy of South Korea as a capitalist dreamland. "If you go to South Korea," it was said, "your back will ache from gathering dollars in the street." South Korea, which Communist China had long portrayed as an impoverished capitalist enemy and "baby" subject of US imperialism, started becoming viewed as a destination that enabled an escape from long poverty in China. Korean Chinese emigration to South Korea started slowly in the late 1980s, as the South Korean economy expanded after hosting the Seoul Olympics in 1988, but then gathered dramatic momentum in 1992 with diplomatic normalization between the two countries.

The kinship visits evolved into full-fledged labor migration within a couple of years (see chapter 2). Starting in the early 1990s, many Korean Chinese who entered with family-visit visas began overstaying and working as cheap, illegal labor. However, despite the increasing numbers of undocumented Korean Chinese, the visa situation was not favorable to Korean Chinese from Yanbian. As I noted above, their ancestors had mostly moved to China from what is now North Korea, beginning in the late nineteenth century. Thus they had a harder time obtaining family-visit visas because the majority of them did not have actual kinship ties to South Koreans or registration records in South Korea.[12] As the suddenly well-off Korean Chinese returning from South Korea spurred a new Korean dream, illegal brokers developed methods to forge visas and passports by "making and faking kinship" via marriage (Freeman

2011) and putting into circulation fake documents as pricy commodities. Again, the stakes were high, as everything was illegal and the financial costs were extreme, which often put visa seekers into debt.[13] But there was a widely shared presumption that migrants could pay off the debt in a year or two, so the debt was not seen as an insurmountable obstacle. The illegal migration market expanded year by year, expedited by the brokers and by the high demand for visas to South Korea. The reliance on illegal brokers eventually became the most common route to get into South Korea. Within a far-flung black market advertised by word of mouth, those who wanted to enter South Korea searched for the best brokers with the highest success rates. The black market and its impact continued even after visa regulations were loosened to create a form of free movement (see chapters 2 and 3). The South Korean Wind greatly expanded the borderland dreams, driving unprecedented migration and economic development.

The Rise of the Korean Dream

In South Korea, the Korean diaspora had been long neglected, and acknowledgment of it even forbidden, under the Cold War regime. As the Cold War political mood gradually thawed in the early 1990s, the South Korean government began to pay attention to overseas Koreans (see chapters 1 and 2). Starting in the late nineteenth century, numerous natural disasters, as well as high taxes imposed by the corrupt government, displaced Koreans from the Korean peninsula, first to Russia and later to China, in search of farmland where they could put their diligence, work ethic, and productive rice-farming skills to good use (H. O. Park 2005, 2015; A. Park 2019). Later, poor Korean farmers displaced by Japanese colonization (1910–1945) left for Japanese cities to find better work opportunities, only to be confronted by harsh discrimination (Kawashima 2009). Koreans who migrated to Russia, China, and Japan during the colonial era commonly experienced ethnic discrimination and class exploitation as migrant farmers or workers, and their legal status remained unclear under ambiguous border controls.[14] Their marginalized status made them receptive to socialist movements that advocated for the landless and the exploited (Ryang 1997; Yun 2016).[15] Many ended up actively contributing to the communist revolutions in China and Russia and closely collaborating with the Japanese Communist Party.

I.2 Cover of *The Seoul Wind* (Yanji, China: Yŏnbyŏn Inmin Ch'ulp'ansa, 1996), an essay collection by Ryu Yeonsan. Photo by the author.

Following independence from Japan in 1945 and the Korean War (1950–1953), political tensions and military confrontation continued to characterize the relationship between North Korea and South Korea. One of the issues the two regimes competed over was embracing overseas Koreans. Before South Korea began recognizing or granting official status to overseas Koreans, North Korea initiated support mechanisms for them, especially after the Korean War.[16] In Japan, there was (and is) an ethnic Korean organization that explicitly supports North Korea. In addition, given that Kim Il Sung (the founder of North Korea) was deeply involved in the anti-Japanese movement as part of the Communist Revolution in northeast China (Manchuria), Koreans in China developed close ties to North Korea through kinship visits, as well as educational exchanges (such as when Yanbian University was established in 1949). During the Cold War, no "socialist" overseas Koreans were allowed to have any contact with South Koreans under the national security law.[17] South Korea's authoritarian regimes utilized anti-communism as a means of creating a unified "pure" nation completely free of communists. "Red-hunting" tar-

geted not only Koreans within South Korea but also Koreans abroad—in particular, in Japan, Germany, and the United States—framing them as North Korean spies and, when possible, imposing draconian punishments, such as execution or life imprisonment (Hong 2020).[18]

As a result, overseas Koreans were considered potentially dangerous to South Korean national security, and many were falsely accused of being North Korean spies.[19] However, the issue of abandoned overseas Koreans gained new critical attention as South Korea experienced an intensive democratization movement in the 1980s and 1990s. Bringing a human rights perspective to bear, the more democratic South Korean governments, nongovernmental organizations, and media began to support recognition and reparations for overseas Koreans falsely accused of being communists.[20] For example, as a humanitarian gesture, the South Korean government organized overseas Korean family-visit programs in the 1980s to enable the renewal of kinship ties broken during the Korean War.[21] Moreover, the South Korean government came to increasingly take a neoliberal approach to understanding long-forgotten overseas Koreans by exploring "the methods of utilization of the overseas Korean" (*Chaeoe tongp'o hwaryong pangan* in Korean). Koreans in diaspora, previously feared and suspected as potential communists, appear to be included in the Korean national imaginary at the intersection of democratization with neoliberal South Korea, as Hyun Ok Park has shown (H. O. Park 2015).

Korean Chinese migration emerged in the early 1990s from this new political-economic context, which included South Korea's neoliberalism and democratization and China's rapid privatization. Over the past three decades, neoliberalism swept through and greatly transformed South Korea, especially as a result of the so-called International Monetary Fund crisis in the late 1990s (see chapters 2 and 3). This aggressive neoliberal restructuring, as many scholars have noted across the global context, aggravated economic inequality through "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2005) and "economization" (Brown 2015), as market logic has encroached upon nearly all social domains, redesigning them to serve capital's interest.[22] During and after the restructuring process in South Korea, individuals have been forced to cultivate certain modes of behavior, bodily discipline, and personhood in order to properly cope with market logics (see chapters 5 and 6), including self-interest, self-responsibility, and self-sufficiency (Barry, Thomas, and Rose 1996; Binkley 2009; Foucault 2008; Ong 2006; Rose 1996). As seen in other neoliberal contexts, those who have lost a safety net, sense of community, and the state's protection

have been exposed to extreme precariousness and insecurity, both materially and emotionally (Allison 2015; Berlant 2011; Butler 2010; Bourdieu 2000; M. Jung 2017; Standing 2011).[23] In the wake of the crisis that hit East Asia in the late 1990s, Korean Chinese, who were already experiencing rapid privatization and a growing need for self-responsibility in China, migrated to South Korea, where many aspects of life were subject to economic logic and where individuals were judged primarily in terms of economic value.

Korean Chinese transnational migration should also be contextualized with other contemporary transnational migrations arising from economic necessity and political turmoil that have uprooted large populations and put them in critically vulnerable situations.[24] The movement of Korean Chinese should be understood not simply in terms of mobility but as a form of "migration" (De Genova 2013)—a large-scale shift of population that has come to be highly regulated by nation-states (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). In the neoliberalizing milieu, the state has emerged more and more as the power that determines who should be included or excluded, for how long and under what conditions (see chapters 2 and 3).[25] Korean Chinese migration, encouraged by the conditions of post-socialist, privatized China, exemplifies the unique state-market complex that has heavily promoted and implemented market logics and economization while preserving socialist and nationalist foundations under the name of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (Meisner 1999; Rofel 2007).[26] Here, the migration of Korean Chinese, both domestic and transnational, has been considered an inevitable and influential means of building self-sufficient personhood and promoting urban lifestyles (Chu 2010; Hoffman 2010; Ngai 2005; Rofel 2007; Xiang 2005; H. Yan 2008; Zhang 2001).

Borderland Dreams

Yanbian, as an ethnic borderland, has been a site of negotiation for the different dreams of different groups of people in the wake of the Korean dream. Since the early 1990s, Korean Chinese have migrated from Yanbian, whereas Han Chinese have settled in to fill the void left behind. In the late 1990s, North Korean refugees crossed the Tumen River in order to escape from the food crisis—the so-called Arduous March—and North Korean women have married Chinese men (both Korean Chinese and Han Chinese) without being able to register their marriages in China.

Recently, more North Korean workers have worked in North Korean restaurants and factories located in the economic special zone in Yanbian. South Koreans also have flocked to Yanbian for the purpose of new business expansion and children's education. Because of proximity to Yanbian, Russians have visited, mainly from the east part of Russia to the city of Hunchun in order to purchase Chinese goods and sell them back in Russia. Indeed, Yanbian is a dynamic borderland in which different dreams have been competing for the last three decades.

Situating Yanbian among these competing desires, *Borderland Dreams* focuses on the new political economy of a neoliberal, democratic South Korea and a privatized China by using three lenses—ethnicized bodies, (South) Korean money (hereafter Korean money), and transnational time—to examine the mechanisms that have formed and transformed borderland dreams. First, by illustrating the detailed process of reconnection between Korean Chinese and South Korea, the long-forbidden homeland, this book offers a new understanding of the concept of ethnicity and ethnic bodies. I am particularly interested in what I call "ethnicized ethnic bodies," analyzing the process by which Korean Chineseness has been ethnicized and marketized within a transnational labor market.[27] I show how Korean Chinese ethnicity, repressed in China during the Cold War, has been revived, promoted, and transformed into a form of currency (see chapters 1 and 2) that has enabled Korean Chinese to enter the transnational labor market. I do not simply suggest that the authentic characteristics of Korean Chinese ethnicity or their ethnic similarities to South Koreans enabled Korean Chinese to wield competitive power or use their ethnic currency in the South Korean labor market. Rather, I argue that the particular relationality of Korean Chinese to South Korea—their status as *almost Korean, but not quite*—is precisely what has created a Korean Chinese niche in the South Korean economy.[28] I demonstrate how Korean Chinese have performed this ethnic relationality within a process of entry into and adjustment to South Korea—with the rising homeland functioning as a marketplace for Korean Chinese labor. I extend my analysis of ethnicity by drawing on theories of "articulation" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) and "performativity" (Butler 1990, 1993), with a focus on how the Korean Chinese performance of ethnicity articulates with gender and class, as in fake marriages to South Koreans, and how the ethnic currency of Korean Chinese workers has rendered them as suitably cheap labor in certain service industries in South Korea.[29] In other words, Korean Chinese have shaped their labor migration into a site of value

production and identity articulation, and have been made, and remade, into a transnational ethnic working class.

Second, *Borderland Dreams* illuminates the power of Korean money, a form of remittance that exerts a strong transformative power over material reality and also sparks anxiety about intimate lives. These remittances have induced rapid urbanization, bringing rural Korean Chinese to cities. They have also reshaped the ethnic composition of the region, as Han Chinese migrants have flocked into the city of Yanji in order to serve the newly thriving leisure industry—karaoke bars, saunas, and massage parlors—and into the Yanbian countryside, which is being vacated by the outflow of Korean Chinese to the cities and to South Korea. The influx of remittances has fundamentally restructured the landscape of and ethnic relationships in Yanbian. Any remittance-dependent economy is vulnerable to factors such as currency exchange rates and international economic conditions, regardless of the work ethic of individuals or their strength of purpose, as evidenced by what happened when the global financial crisis hit the Korean Chinese labor market in 2008 and 2009 (chapter 6). I highlight how remittance-dependent development is neither stable nor predictable, given the fluctuations of the global economy. More critically, remittance-driven development has shaped a new ethnic interdependency between Han Chinese and Korean Chinese, despite the long ethnic separations of the region. Han Chinese have not remained unaffected by the dramatic social changes generated by the Korean Wind, playing a critical role in remittance development as both investors and service workers. This growing ethnic interdependency can help us situate the Korean Wind as a transnational economic drive that reconfigures the ethnic and urban landscape across and beyond Yanbian.

I further view Korean money as entailing an attachment to a certain place and a certain time. In other words, Korean money, as distinct from Chinese money, is a powerful transnational emblem of what the time spent in South Korea means to Korean Chinese. Korean Chinese frequently told me, up until the late 2000s, "If I had worked in South Korea, I could have made ten times more than what I made in China." Or they said, "Taking on debt to go to South Korea via illegal migration brokers was worth trying because I could pay off the debt in a year or so—as long as I ended up getting to work in South Korea." For them, South Korean money signifies a speed and potency that Chinese money does not. At the same time, given that South Korean money is always remitted or relocated from South Korea to China, we can suppose an interdependency between those who

are waiting for the money and those who are sending it—a connection, or in some cases a failure to connect, created by Korean money. Yet since Korean money requires an exchange into Chinese currency for actual use, the final amount in hand is subject to the whims and fluctuations of the exchange rate—and thus to general global economic circumstances. Korean money therefore embodies an anxiety stemming from the uneven and sometimes unpredictable chasms between when the money is made, when it is sent, and when it is spent. The days, weeks, and months of hard work are not directly translated into the final amount of Korean money that is remitted, since this money is affected along the way by so many external influences, including the currency exchange rate, diplomatic relationships, and the global economy. Exploring the ubiquitous stories of Korean money that I encountered in China and South Korea, I argue that Korean money is an affective currency that entails a division between time spent working and time spent waiting. It is also a powerful but vulnerable currency that has subtly transformed social bonds and material realities.

Third, whereas other migration studies raise the question of belongingness and out-of-placeness in relation to the state and culture, I explore the sense of belonging in relation to "transnational temporality" through examinations of visa regulations and regimes of waiting imposed on migrants and their families. Korean Chinese migrant workers have been subject to frequent and unpredictable legal changes imposed by the South Korean government. Most Korean Chinese who remained undocumented were granted amnesty in 2005, under a new regulation aimed at preventing Korean Chinese from permanently settling in South Korea (chapter 3). According to the new visa regulation, Korean Chinese migrants can only stay in South Korea for a limited number of consecutive years; they are required to return to China every three years. As a result, a spatial split has opened up, as Korean Chinese view South Korea as a place of work and China as a place of resting and waiting. During the "resting" period in China, migrant workers generally make no money; they can only spend, as anxiety about their unstable financial status increases. In addition, Korean Chinese migrants have in recent years come to feel that they have missed out on the Chinese boom and are lagging behind those who never left to work in South Korea (chapter 6).

I also examine transnational temporality through the lens of waiting (see chapter 4). I explore the lives of those who are waiting for remittances, for the return of family members, and for the opportunity to go to South Korea. They are supposed to maintain the household and manage

the funds sent back by their partners, and yet their long wait is not always rewarded, as partners can be unfaithful or unreliable and the remittances may stop (chapter 4). Those who are waiting to leave for South Korea tend to stop working in Yanbian, as they often have to be ready to pick up and go at a moment's notice. Korean Chinese migrants face unpredictable rhythms of migration, interrupted by personal events and crises, aging bodies, financial developments, new visa regulations, and most of all, the fluctuations of the global economy. Instead of simply being controlled by these rhythms, migrants attempt to take their own control of time and transcend the regulatory rhythms that limit their transnational lives (see chapter 3). My argument is that state-imposed rhythms intersecting with market-driven rhythms reconfigure transnational time-space linkages and a transnational working class through the actual material force of transnational temporality.

Book Chapters

Borderland Dreams develops its archival and ethnographic analysis in three sections. Part I comprises chapters 1 and 2. This part stages Yanbian as an ethnic borderland and Korean Chinese as a mobile ethnicity to historicize the rise of the Korean dream. In particular, while exploring their encounters with the long-forbidden homeland of South Korea, I show the cultural, political, and legal process by which Korean Chinese have been ethnicized as a transnational working class moving between China and South Korea. The Korean dream rapidly spread across Yanbian, and Korean Chinese as cheap and capable migrant workers were largely welcomed in the South Korean labor market. But at the same time, the Korean dream was hindered by the South Korean government's legal constraints on the recognition of Korean Chinese (as not equal to that of other overseas Koreans) and often unwelcoming daily encounters at work.

In part II, I analyze the hopes and frustrations, rise and fall, mobility and stuckness in the fluctuation of the Korean dream through three ethnographic lenses: bodies, money, and time. Chapter 3, based on the stories of three Korean Chinese female workers, highlights the spatial division created by this repetitive migration: South Korea as a place for *making* money and Yanbian as a place for *spending* money. I argue that under these split spatial practices, migrants have internalized a rhythm (transnational temporality)—a back and forth—that serves as a governing force on the

laboring body, thereby making care for the body more difficult and prolonging its exploitation in intensive labor. Chapter 4 analyzes stuckness, another form of transnational temporality, through waiting practices. I argue that while waiting may begin as an act of love, it is susceptible to being transformed into a kind of work that requires the constant management of monetary flows and remakes the expectations and realities of transnational spousal relationships. In other words, those who do not migrate may nonetheless sustain a critical dimension of migratory practice.

Part III comprises chapter 5 and chapter 6 and examines new reflections and reevaluations of the Korean dream in the wake of the globally rising Chinese economy. Chapter 5 examines the hesitance that Korean Chinese, as well as Han Chinese, have demonstrated in response to the Korean dream—between living in Yanbian and leaving Yanbian. While exploring the differentiated but interrelated participation in Yanbian's remittance-driven economic development, I argue that the Korean dream has led not only to a desire for transnational migration but also to a newly defined interethnic relationship. Since the financial crisis of 2008 dramatically altered the terms of the Korean dream by greatly increasing Chinese economic clout, many Korean Chinese have turned their attention to a new dream: a Chinese dream. Chapter 6 elaborates on migrants' struggles with the new social imperative to "stop being a migrant, become an entrepreneur"—that is, to break the cycle of migration in the new era that has followed the Korean Wind.

Finally, the conclusion illuminates the afterlife of the thirty-year-old Korean dream as it loses the status of being the dominant dream in Yanbian. The future is open-ended, with new dreams to dream, new actions to take, and new plans to make, as new generations arrive.

Introduction: Winds of Migration

1 All translations from Chinese and Korean are mine, unless otherwise noted.

2 In another work, I use the term "forbidden homeland" (J. Kwon 2019a). Any connection to South Korea, a capitalist enemy, was forbidden to Korean Chinese during the Cold War. My earlier work analyzes the fear and hesitancy toward South Korea—feelings that older Korean Chinese Communist Party members developed—mainly during the era of the Cultural Revolution.

3 Manchuria is a borderland area that had long been the subject of territorial disputes between China, Japan, Korea (Chosŏn dynasty), and Russia. Andre Schmid (1997) illuminates the complex territorial desire for Koreans to regain Manchuria as a "lost land" by focusing on the discourse introduced by Sin Ch'aeho. Manchuria was also subject to territorial disputes during the first Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, and the First World War (see N. Song 2018). It was also a sphere for Russia to try sovereignty experiments, along with China and Japan (see A. Park 2019).

4 Chinese ethnic minority policy is based on the notion of "plural singularity" (Mullaney 2011), which recognizes diversity while emphasizing the central control of the government.

5 In Yanbian, old Communist Party members recalled their memories of the Cold War and descriptions of capitalism as a "devil" or "enemy" of communism. Conversations with the author.

6 The rise of the market in the post-socialist context has been discussed by former-Soviet studies scholars; see Mandel and Humphry 2002; Rivkin-Fish 2009.

7 In fact, the merchants I happened to meet were predominantly women. And when we went to the Yanji West Market (*Sŏsijang* in Korean), most owners (*laoban*) were female. In Yanbian, a common saying has it that "there is no place where Korean Chinese do not go," along with a more gender-specific saying that "the first business travelers were those who went to sell kimchi in Han caves [Han Chinese–populated areas, meaning most Chinese cities, with a bit of a derogatory meaning]." In many cases, these female merchants did not speak Chinese at all or very little when they started doing business with Han Chinese. All business was a learning process—involving not only the Chinese language but also the Chinese way of doing business. Gowoon Noh (2011) discusses female entrepreneurs in the Yanji West Market.

8 Various Korean Chinese informants testified how the "advanced" culture of North Korea was influenced by Korean Japanese who returned to North Korea from Japan. As I mention in a note below, Tessa Morris-Suzuki (2007) discusses how Koreans were repatriated from Japan to North Korea. This repatriation program was intended to tighten the relationship between North Korea and Koreans in Japan, who might serve as a conduit to transfer "advanced" and modernized culture from Japan to North Korea. Japanese products were sold and exported to China through Korean Chinese merchants. As a result, Yanbian was one of the first places in China to enjoy color TVs, audio recorders, and video players imported from Japan, according to informants in Yanbian.

9 In Yanbian, people frequently alternate between "Russia" and "Soviet Union" and use the terms interchangeably. Here, I use "Russia" because the area where Korean Chinese did business is mostly in current Russian territory. Yet when Korean Chinese refer to the "wind," only the term "Soviet Wind" (*Ssoryŏn param*) is used.

10 It is common to see Russian merchants or tourists shopping in Yanbian, particularly in Hunchun, a city that borders China, North Korea, and the far eastern part of Russia.

11 As South Korean companies and businesspeople came to China starting in 1992 in search of new business opportunities, especially in the Shandong area, young Korean Chinese who could fluently speak both Chinese and Korean moved to larger Chinese cities to serve as translators or mediators in South Korean businesses. See Jaesok Kim's *Chinese Labor in a Korean Factory* (2013).

12 The majority of Korean Chinese living outside Yanbian (in Jilin, Heilongjiang, and Liaoning) are descended from migrants from the southern part of Korea—current South Korea—who came during the Japanese occupation. Consequently, they could easily demonstrate family ties to South Korea and were, as a group, able to enter the South Korean labor market earlier than the Yanbian Korean Chinese.

13 Korean Chinese victims of the fraudulent brokers organized the Association for the Fraud Victim in 1996, giving voice to the tragic situation and requesting that the South Korean government accept the victims into South Korea to pay off the debt (*Donga Ilbo* [East Asia Daily], November 30, 1996). I interviewed the president of the association, Youngsook Lee, and heard about the victims' situations, their desperate need, and the association's activities that helped them recover from their endebtedness.

14 Jaeeun Kim (2016) describes Korean border-crossing during the colonial era as a form of "transborder membership." Hyun Gwi Park (2018) discusses Koreans in Russia and their complex identities under Soviet ethnic politics by showing the rise in importance of kin networks rather than ethnic networks. Alyssa Park (2019) discusses the diverse jurisdiction practices

applied to Koreans by China, Russia, Japan, and Chosŏn (the last Korean dynasty, which fell to Japanese imperialism in 1910), which she calls "sovereignty experiments."

15 Hongkoo Han (2013) has elaborated on the struggles of Korean members of the Communist Party in China as a minority group under the "one country, one party policy" promulgated by Stalin, focusing on the Minsaengdan incident. Zainichi Korean scholar Keun-Cha Yoon (2016) illustrates the close connections between members of the Chosŏn Communist Party and members of the Japanese Communist Party, connections that offered great support for Koreans in Japan as an ethnic minority that was exploited not only by the Japanese but also by capitalism—even though it exacerbated ethnic tensions within the Japanese party. Sonia Ryang (1997) has written about Koreans in Japan who have supported, and been supported by, North Korea, particularly the Chongryon association, and the complexity of diasporic identities in Japan, North Korea, and South Korea.

16 Tessa Morris-Suzuki (2007) elaborates on the choice of approximately 90,000 Koreans in Japan to move to North Korea beginning in 1959 as part of a humanitarian gesture by the Red Cross—in collaboration with North Korea, Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Yet those Koreans who were willing to "return" to North Korea to avoid extreme discrimination and exploitation in Japan faced different realities than they had imagined, including poverty and political constraints.

17 Korean Chinese who lived through the Cultural Revolution developed a habit of silence about their ethnic and national identity, especially in relation to South Korea, which was considered a forbidden homeland (Kwon 2019a). In addition, according to interviews I conducted with older Korean Chinese people, when a political split between North Korea and China developed in the 1960s, Korean Chinese were not allowed contact with their North Korean relatives, and some were accused of being "North Korean special spies," especially during the Cultural Revolution. However, Korean Chinese who were trained for and contributed to the Chinese Communist Revolution participated in the Korean War, fighting on the side of North Korea, China's communist ally (Cumings 2010; Kissinger 2011).

18 Because Koreans in Japan supported an ethnic organization with strong ties to North Korea, they were often accused of spying for North Korea (Hong 2020). Du-yul Song, a renowned professor based in Germany, was subjected to legal punishment that prevented him from entering South Korea due to his visits and possible political ties to North Korea (see D. Song 2017).

19 There have been many lawsuits against the state's false accusations of overseas Koreans as North Korean spies. After several decades, the victims finally established their innocence. See Hong (2020) for multiple cases of such accusations against overseas Koreans by the authoritarian regimes, including against Koreans in Japan, Germany, and the United States.

20 A Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created in 2005 to investigate the South Korean state's violence, reveal truths long concealed by the authoritarian regimes, and compensate victims for the state's wrongdoing.

21 According to the *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, Korean Chinese have been able to visit relatives in South Korea since the Chinese government allowed travel to South Korea in 1982. Korean Chinese travel and migration were expedited after the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988 for the purposes of hometown visits, labor migration, and study abroad. See http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Index?contents_id=E0068435.

22 Andrew Kipnis (2007) has raised critical concerns about how the concept of neoliberalism has been reified and overused in a holistic way to encompass diverse political, economic, and cultural phenomena across the world, described variously as the "neoliberal system," the "neoliberal world order," and "neoliberal capitalism." He introduces different approaches to neoliberalism: (1) Marxist approaches to neoliberal global capitalism; (2) free market individualism based on the policies of Reagan and Thatcher; (3) neoliberalism as ideology and policy; (4) neoliberalism that links economic policies and cultural effects, producing a population with the health, housing, education, and employment necessary to act as autonomous individuals. Kipnis suggests that instead of taking a broad, holistic approach, "neoliberalism should be particularized to show exactly which policies, or traditions of thoughts, or discursive actions the author is defining as neoliberal" (Kipnis 2007, 388). I use Kipnis's criticisms to think through the ways in which Korean Chinese migrants have been juggling two different neoliberalisms—South Korean and Chinese.

23 Minwoo Jung (2017) discusses urban inequality, introducing three precarious housing styles: *Oktapbang* (rooftop), *Banjiha* (half underground), *Gosiwon* (a tiny cubicle). In the midst of precarious housing inequality, Korean Chinese and other migrant workers have occupied these types of housing due to their low price and easier accessibility, but this has left them vulnerable to fires, hygiene issues, and security problems.

24 In the process of "migration," migrants experience abjection and precariousness, as many migration scholars have documented and described through different lenses: out-of-placeness (Ameeriar 2017; Constable 2014; Mathews 2011), vulnerability and deportation (Cabot 2014; De Genova 2010), transnational intimacy (Brennan 2004, 2014; Cheng 2013; Faier 2009; Freeman 2011), state violence and displacement (Coutin 2016), life-and-death danger (Andersson 2014; De León 2015; Lucht 2011), extreme labor exploitation (Holmes 2013), and deep liminality/long waiting to claim a desired status (Fassin 2011; Ticktin 2011).

25 In addition to previous migration studies that questioned cultural adaptation, identity formation, and capital accumulation (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc 1993; Clifford 1997; Gilroy 1993; Hall 1966; Ong 1999; Ong and

Nonini 1996), current scholarship has focused on the emerging extreme marginalization of migrants who are fleeing war-ravaged or impoverished home countries—places they had to leave in order to live (Andersson 2014; De León 2015; Fassin 2011; Lucht 2011; Ticktin 2011).

26 In *Post-Soviet Social: Neoliberalism, Social Modernity, Biopolitics*, Stephen Collier points out one of characteristics of economic reforms in the Post-Soviet era is the aim to "responsibilize" citizens, "not just as subjects of need but as sovereign consumers making calculative choices based on individual preferences" (2011, 8). This gradual inscription of the sense of responsibility is parallel to "neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics."

27 I build on conversations about ethnicity as a site of "value production" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, 4) and "cultural currency" (Cattelino 2008). Recent studies have started conceptualizing "Ethnicity Inc." (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009), "ethno-enterprisez" (Cattelino 2008), "natural economic groups" (Dirlik 2000, 129), and "ethnic entrepreneurs" (DeHart 2007, 2010), offering various perspectives on how ethnic difference is integrated and interpolated into the domain of the market. The economic currency that ethnic culture creates can also help to secure the political sovereignty of ethnic groups, as seen in the case of Native Americans in the United States (Cattelino 2008).

28 Bhabha describes "mimicry," borrowed from Lacan, as one of the illusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge, and he asserts that it is "the desire for a recognizable Other as a subject of a difference that is *almost the same but not quite*" (Bhabha 1994, 122). However, colonial mimicry is not a simple narcissistic identification with the Other, or a desire for the impossibility of the Other. Rather, while not having an obvious desiring object, colonial mimicry has "strategic objectives," producing an anomalous representation of the colonized. Even though I am aware that Korean Chinese transnational migration differs greatly from colonial India, and Korean Chinese are not actually "mimicking" or trying to "become" exactly like South Koreans, the concept of mimicry—"almost the same, but not quite"—is essential for me to develop my discussion of the particular way in which Korean Chinese have created and promoted their ethnic niche and relationality and become integrated into the transnational labor market. "Almost Korean" was the name of a panel (in which I participated) organized at the annual meeting of American Anthropological Association in 2007.

29 Here I borrow the concept of "performativity" that Judith Butler developed in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993) in order to overcome dichotomous, fixed understandings of gender identity constructed between nature and culture, biology and sociology, determinism and voluntarism. Butler mainly argues, in *Gender Trouble*, that sex becomes a naturalized norm and that gender is the effect of the constraints of normativity, produced through forcible heterosexual normativity. Developing

this argument in *Bodies That Matter*, Butler argues that "performativity is not a singular act, for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition"(Butler 1993, xxi). The point is that gender identity is the effect of a compulsory reiteration of gender norms rather than a preexisting essence or an intractable construction (Weeks 1998, 125–34).

Chapter 1. Ethnic Borderland

1 What is on the move in this poem is not only the people of Yanbian but also the symbolic Yanbian, which has been transferred along with migrant workers to other places, such as Seoul, Beijing, Shanghai, and so forth.

2 These are districts in and near Seoul where Korean Chinese live and work in large numbers.

3 *Chosŏn* connotes multiple meanings. It can indicate the name of a dynasty that existed prior to modern Korea; it can imply the ethnic identity of Koreans—as Chosŏn ethnic people; and it can mean "North Korea."

4 For representative novels about the history of Korean Chinese migration, see Hongil Choi, *Nunmul chŏjŭn Tuman'gang* [Tearing Tumen River] (1994); Su-gil An, *Pukkando* (1995; originally published in parts, 1959–67, in the journal *Sasanggye*); Kuk-ch'ŏl Ch'oe, *Kando chŏnsŏl* [Legend of Kando] and *Kwangbok ŭi huyedŭl* [Descendants of the liberation] (1999; 2017).

5 This "unhomeliness" also takes the form of melancholia, a condition generated by the loss of a loved one who cannot be grieved properly (Butler 1997; Eng and Han 2003; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Zavella 2011). I take melancholia as a useful lens onto the dominant structure of feeling of Yanbian: anticipation and waiting, the affect expressed in the local saying, "Everybody is gone with the Korean wind." This constant and common melancholia as "unfinished process of grieving" (Butler 1997) is part and parcel of everyday life in Yanbian.

6 Relevant Korean Chinese history books include *Common Sense of Korean Chinese History* (Kim, Kang, and Kim 1998), *The Traces of Korean Chinese* (CTKCH 1991), *One Hundred Years of Korean Chinese History* (Hyun, Lee, and Huh 1982), *Jilin Korean Chinese* (JPA 1995), and multiple collections of local histories written by local historians (Yanji, Longjing, Tumen, Helong, Wangqing, Hunchun). See also CTKCH 1996. All are written in Korean and published in Yanbian.

7 The Qing government did not allow Chinese to live in what is now northeast China because it was the birthplace of their dynasty, their "holy land." During the late nineteenth century, Koreans began sneaking across the Tumen River to farm, while Russians were aggressively moving south into