Abstract:
One of the most challenging aspects of the historiography of modern nation states is how to write diaspora peoples of an immigrant past into the national history, especially when the diaspora settlement pre-dates the birth of the modern nation state itself. The Korean Chinese as a minority nationality in today's People's Republic of China exemplify the myriad issues that occur when nationalistic historiography seeks to override and sanitize an uneven past. By looking at the impulse of Chinese nationalistic historiography in appropriating the subaltern past of Korean Chinese, this paper exposes and problematizes the master narrative of nationalism in history writing. Master narratives, by imposing "nationalism," a prototype modern set of values, retrospectively on a chaotic and contingent past render diaspora peoples particularly vulnerable to the sways of nationalism. Historians of diaspora peoples should therefore be critically aware that the past is full of contingencies that must be contextualized.

Imposing Nationalism on Diaspora Peoples: Korean Chinese in the Master Narrative of Chinese Nationalism

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ABSTRACT

One of the most challenging aspects of the historiography of modern nation states is how to write diaspora peoples of an immigrant past into the national history, especially when the diaspora settlement pre-dates the birth of the modern nation state itself. The Korean Chinese as a minority nationality in today's People's Republic of China exemplify the myriad issues that occur when nationalistic historiography seeks to override and sanitize an uneven past. By looking at the impulse of Chinese nationalistic historiography in appropriating the subaltern past of Korean Chinese, this paper exposes and problematizes the master narrative of nationalism in history writing. Master narratives, by imposing "nationalism," a prototype modern set of values, retrospectively on a chaotic and contingent past render diaspora peoples particularly vulnerable to the sways of nationalism. Historians of diaspora peoples should therefore be critically aware that the past is full of contingencies that must be contextualized.

Keywords: Diaspora Nationality; Tacit Taboos; Nationalistic Historiography; Chinese Nationalism; Chinese Ethnic Minorities; Korean Chinese; Master Narratives

INTRODUCTION

Typing the characters for "Yanbian independence" (*yanbian duli*) into China's main search engine Baidu.com produces results that hint at the debate over whether or not Korean Chinese in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture want independence. The so-called Yanbian Independence Incident referred to in numerous blogs and Bulletin Board System (BBS) discussion forums is hard to pin down. As a matter of fact, one can easily get so lost in these pseudo-positions either accusing the Korean Chinese of their secessionist inclinations or coming to their defense that the alleged independence incident itself is ultimately subsumed if not simply non-existent. As the illicit space where these discussions occur indicates, none of these pseudo-positions represent any officially sanctioned or institutionalized knowledge. In fact, those pseudo-positions due to their potential to incite ethnic tension are increasingly coming under the scrutiny of Chinese cyber policing. They

have become "tacit taboos."[1] But their existence and easy accessibility to almost anyone with internet access are nonetheless a representation which could easily become common knowledge. In a country where nationalistic sentiment runs high, the pseudo-positions and the illicit knowledge contained therein could be easily adopted by certain circles where such tacit taboo histories somehow read as more real and convincing than state-sanctioned news and official historiography.

Examples of such tacit taboo constructs evident in the online material include:[2]

(1) Official history often ignores that the Korean Chinese were the "trailblazers" for the Japanese annexation of Manchuria. Living as Japanese expatriates protected by Japanese police, they instigated many incidents including the Wanbaoshan Incident in July 1931. The Wanbaoshan Incident resulted in a huge number of Chinese expatriates being murdered in Pyongyang and Seoul. The Wanbaoshan Incident was also the prelude of Japan's invasion of Manchuria (He Zhiyuan, Tianya BBS 2012-12-31).

(2) According to records seized from the Japanese army at the end of WWII, Japan has deployed a total of 1,280,000 ground boots in China (700,000 in Manchuria and 580,000 in north and south China). The number of Koreans enlisted in the Japanese army was 400,000, with 350,000 having fought against Chinese. We can see what a great proportion the Koreans constitute of the invaders (TheSilentBarrierDitch, JunZhuan BBS 2012-06-06).

(3) In 1937, the first batch of Japanese forces that broke into the "Zhonghua Gate" in Nanjing was the "Korea Division". … After the atrocious "Nanjing Massacre," five divisions of the Japanese army in Nanjing were rewarded by the Japanese emperor, and one of those divisions was the Korean Division numbering 30,000 (Yilinlengyue, 360doc Personal Library 2013-02-17).

The downfall of one of the most well-known leaders of the Korean nationality, Chu Tok-hae, in August 1968 illustrates the inter-mutability between such tacit taboo histories and official historiography when ultra-nationalism in the form of a strong Han-ethnocentrism overrides minorities' agency in affirming their non-conformity and non-conforming past. Chu joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1931. As a Party veteran and seasoned revolutionary, Chu held a number of leadership positions in Yanbian (already an autonomous prefecture by then), Jilin province, and the national legislature before he was purged three years into the Chinese Cultural Revolution.[3] Chu is widely known among both the Korean Chinese minority and Han Chinese majority. What is of interest and relevance to this paper are the

[1] The term "tacit taboo" is coined by the author to suggest that despite being very inflammatory and having currency in some online communities, these constructs are constantly subject to China's ideological policing in the cyberspace.

[2] The three examples cited here meet the selection criteria of easy accessibility and currency (i.e. they have been widely reposted and commented upon).

[3] Bernard V. Olivier, *The Implementation of China's Nationality Policy in the Northeastern Provinces* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1993), 147.

charges he faced which speak unmistakably to his ethnic background and the Korean nationality situation in China as a diaspora nationality of a recent past. The frenzied proletarian Red Guards (mobs of youth who commanded social authority by citing Mao's class-struggle directives) branded Chu as Khrushchev's representative in China, traitor, spy, and king-to-be of an independent Korean kingdom on Chinese soil. They also charged Chu with disguising his counter-revolutionary activities beneath his apparently disinterested support for the party's nationality policy of minority people's autonomy. Chu was also charged with promoting Korean ethnic culture in order to foster the sense of belonging to Korea, the "fatherland" among the Korean masses.[4]

If one looks closely into the tacit taboo histories in the online forums such as those cited above, a striking resemblance emerges between the charges against Chu Tok-hae and what some forum writers today accuse of the Korean nationality as a people. The arguments and evidence presented in these accusations invariably point to and draw their strength from a pieced-together historical narrative that is supposedly self-evident of the Korean nationality's unfaithful inclinations.

This paper, drawing upon existing efforts by ethnic Korean-Chinese historians in repudiating such tacit taboo histories, seeks to deconstruct these tacit taboo writings not by presenting new counter-evidence, but by arguing that both the tacit taboo histories and their counterpart (official historiography) are written in a way best characterized as "retrospective master narratives."

This deconstructionist positionality means that this paper seeks to simultaneously counter two strains of history writing concerning Korean nationality in China. On the one hand, it disagrees with the officially sanctioned historiography (including works written by ethnic Korean Chinese historians) that sanitizes the Korean nationality's experience by writing out many individuals and events that deviate from state-approved narratives of national loyalty, solidarity and common if not identical interests. On the other hand, it exposes the oppressive retrospective wisdom of those tacit taboo history writers whose whole story is based on deviants and deviant developments. Here the exposé is not achieved by completely discarding their narrative "emplotments" as fabrications, but by placing the deviants back in a broader context of historical contingency.

To achieve these two goals, this paper puts the Korean minority's past into an international and historical/temporal context when Northeast China or Manchuria was in flux and therefore national identification of its occupants could be nothing but fluid.

"DIRTY HANDS" OF THIEVING JAPAN

The deplorable forty years as agents of the Japanese Empire

The Thai historian Thongchai Winichakul, in *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation,* talks about "the two-way identification of nationhood." He asserts that defining the modern nation state from a subjective "We-self" point of view will inevitably involve the "othering" of one's neighbors and other nation states.[5] Such "othering" in the historiography

[4] Olivier, *The Implementation of China's Nationality Policy,* 148.

[5] Winichakul Thongchai, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 8.

of modern China is most pronounced with regard to Japan. As the perpetrator of the worst humiliation and suffering China has endured since the first Sino-Japanese war in 1894, Japan occupies a unique position as the all-embracing rallying point of Chinese nationalism. Being complicit with Japan is viewed as the worst crime against the Chinese nation and therefore renders the accomplices as the most estranged "other." These divisive politics are particularly acute in history writing, so much so that the government has suppressed research and writing on collaboration and instead tried to write a glorious past of resistance on behalf of almost every historically visible political entity. But this does not guarantee the eradication of such knowledge from popular memory. In some cases, these memories, due to state suppression, are only submerged under a sanitized surface and thus become tacit taboo histories. In the case of the Korean Chinese, the absence of "collaboration" in official historiography helps to integrate the Koreans into the master narrative of "united as one." However, it simultaneously undermines its credibility because the tacit taboo histories can catch all that has been left out and make the polar opposite case.

Chinese authority in Yanbian and Manchuria was eradicated in the year 1932, when the Nationalist government and the major warlords abandoned the region to formal Japanese rule. Manchuria became Manchukuo, a puppet state whose entire existence relied on the Japanese Kwantung army based there. Though the head of state of Manchukuo was the former Manchu emperor, Pu Yi, the puppet regime was a consortium of interests including some old Manchu imperial elements, Chinese collaborationist groups, Japanese military strategists and personnel, as well as a rising "Korean bourgeoisie," to use Carter J. Eckert's words.[6]

If the Manchus and the Chinese collaborationist interests look bizarre in this picture of Manchukuo, by contrast, the Koreans' presence was a natural historical development—as an older Korean colony incentivized to capitalize on the newer, more inferior colony of the Japanese empire. I argue that due to this historical context, Korean migrants in Manchuria should not be "guilty" of taking advantage of the Chinese, though this was the case.

In *Offspring of Empire*, Eckert notes that before the 1930s, the main economic concern of the Government-General (the Japanese colonial authority on the peninsula) with regard to Korea was the development of agriculture, keeping Korea as a supply base of farm produce for metropolitan Japan. However, after taking over Manchuria, the policy shifted to industrialization of the peninsula for Korea to become a "springboard" for Japan's imperial ambition on the continent.[7] Thus we see the Koch'ang Kims as well as other Korean capitalists taking the initiative in supporting Japanese development projects in Manchuria. In fact, they were leading the Korean elites and bourgeoisie in lobbying the Government-General at the Government-General's industrial commission of 1921 to open Manchuria for Korean industrial expansion.[8]

Looking back, what could possibly have stopped the Koreans from looking at Manchuria for new business opportunities? Japan proved powerful enough by defeating Qing China and

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[6] Carter J. Eckert, *Offspring of Empire: The Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1991).
[7] Eckert, *Offspring of Empire*, 49.
[8] Ibid, 44.

Czarist Russia. It had also pacified and managed two big colonies, the peninsula and Taiwan for two and over three decades respectively. For ordinary Koreans on the peninsula, including those workers who were brought to Manchuria by Korean industrialists and Japanese railway builders, Manchuria simply represented a new "province" on the Japanese imperial map which could offer them more opportunities thanks to their relative language advantage and cultural proximity to Japan cultivated under two decades' Japanese colonial rule. Corresponding to this economic interest on the part of the Korean elites, Japan and its ruling representatives on the peninsula created a whole discourse for the Korean thrust into Manchuria. *Naisen Ittai* or "Japan and Korea as one body" was meant not only to assuage racial tension, or to use Takashi Fujitani's term, the "vulgar racism" of Japanese towards the Koreans, but also to bring Koreans on board for the now enormous opportunity and challenge of the "Great East Asia Holy War."[9]

THE COMMUNIST MONOPOLY ON KOREAN RESISTANCE IN CHINA

Oversight on Koreans who did not fight under Communist leadership and who did not fight against Japan

Every Chinese historian, ethnically Chinese or Korean, who discusses the Korean Chinese past will invariably talk about the comradeship between Korean communists in China and the Communist Party of China (CPC) in the years of anti-Japanese aggression and the four years of Chinese civil war.[10]

Such stories, whether biographical sketches or extensive historical research, have currency not only because they indicate how politically integrated the Koreans were with the modern Chinese nation (represented by its progressive party, the Communist Party of China, which later became the ruling party), but also because they reinforce a retrospective master narrative that helps to legitimize the status quo—the present political structure.

It is not the purpose of this paper to discredit or discount either the CPC or the Korean communist movement's sacrifice for and contribution to the Chinese triumph in the War of Anti-Japanese Aggression, or the more evident contribution the Korean revolutionaries made in bringing the Communist side to victory in the Chinese civil war. However, looking at the pre-Civil War period, this paper finds it problematic that for very political and practical reasons, official Chinese historiography binds Korean resistance activities in China neatly and exclusively to a triumphant winners(communists)-take-all narrative. It is problematic because this uni-linear narrative leaves out those resistance movements and revolutionaries that operated outside the communist paradigm, thus unjustly omitting a major part of the Korean Chinese past from historical memory. As this paper will show, what has been left out is significant enough to seriously complicate the picture of Koreans acting as agents for Japanese imperialism outlined above.

In a paper published in 2007, Professor Jin Jing-yi (an ethnic Korean Chinese historian

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[9] Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during WWII* (Los Angeles, London and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

[10] Dae-Sook Suh and Edward J. Shultz, *Koreans in China: Papers for the Center for Korean Studies No. 16* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 60-71.

teaching at Peking University) made one of the rare and yet very brief mentions of the Korean resistance activities against Japan directed by the *Choson Minjok Hyongmyong-tang* [Korean National Revolutionary Party (KNRP)] in the occupied North China regions.[11] The KNRP was formed a year before the Sino-Japanese war fully broke out in July 1937, but the majority of its members were an assemblage of the former Korean Nationalists' movement in exile and the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai, which started its sporadic operations since the early 1920s. The right-wing KNRP were most critical of the Communist activities, and the Communists, in turn, denounced the KNRP.[12] This partly explains why this group and the operations of its military arm, *Shoson Uiyong-dae* [Korean Volunteer Corps] who fought alongside Chinese National forces, do not occupy much space in the Communist-dominated Chinese official historiography.

Nonetheless, the KNRP, specifically its military unit, indeed fought under the Chinese Nationalist Army. Its three-company-strong force is on record to have fought battles in Hankou, Wuchang, and North China's Hebei Province.[13] Dae-sook Suh, in *The Korean Communist Movement*, documents that the KNRP also had a terrorist organization which carried out a number of assassinations of high-ranking Japanese military personnel such as General Shirakawa, the laming of Mamoru Shigemitsu, and even an attempted assassination of the Japanese Emperor. According to Suh, the later renowned Yan'an Group, which became an important political force in North Korea after the partition of the Peninsula, had many of its members first trained and indoctrinated as members of the KNRP.[14]

After the Chinese Nationalist government relocated to Chongqing, the KNRP along with a re-organized Korean Provisional Government also moved to the war-time capital. It is safe to assume that both organizations, due to their wider popularity compared with the Korean Communists, continued to provide much organization and leadership power to Korean resistance against Japan in the occupied regions.

The Chinese Communist narrative readily admits that Korean resistance activities and movements under its leadership were mainly in Manchuria and the war-time Communist headquarters in Yan'an. This admission, however, also implies that much of the Korean-led anti-Japanese activities in Chongqing as well as the resistance organized and directed from Chongqing were obliterated from official historical accounts because they existed in a sphere conveniently branded as the "Reactionary Nationalist Camps." When it comes to giving a full account of Korean resistance in China, Chinese official historiography is only starting to open its eyes to the non-Communist-led resistance.

Acknowledging that both the CPC and the Korean Communist movement in Manchuria and Yan'an have made great contributions to the fight against Japanese occupying forces in China does not mean that the historiography of the Manchuria and Yan'an episodes is not

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[11] Jin Jingyi, "A Study on the Repatriation of Korean Officers Who Had Served in the Chinese Military Forces" *shixue jikan* 3 (2007): 2.
[12] Dae-Sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement 1918-1948* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), 216.
[13] Suh and Shultz, *Koreans in China*, 130.
[14] Ibid, 220.

without mythmaking.

Since the various Korean Communist party organizations officially merged into the Chinese Communist Party in a "United Front" in 1930, writing about the disunity and internal struggle within this United Front became an embarrassment or tacit taboo for the CPC. In Manchuria, the large Korean population under Japanese rule created a very complicated situation for Communist activities. On the one hand, the Communists relied on the larger population for new recruits; on the other hand, the more orthodox Communists often targeted the "pro-Japanese" bourgeois of the local Korean population for their revolutionary campaigns. One prominent case is the *Minsaeng-dan* Incident, which is seldom mentioned in official Chinese historiography (the official two-volume 1,971-page *Yanbian Chaoxianzu Zizhizhou zhi* only had a one sentence mention of this incident[15]) but has many versions in the tacit taboo histories as well as in historiography outside of China.[16]

The Korean bourgeois created *Minsaeng-dan*, (People's Welfare Party), at a time when the Communists in Manchuria were enthusiastically pushing to establish their liberated "Soviet Zones." As Suh documents, the Communist campaigns involved constant pilferage, harassment, and confiscation of property of the Korean land owners and bourgeois.[17] Confronted by such assaults, the Korean bourgeois allied with the Japanese police and disguised some of the *Minsaeng-dan* members as Communist guerrillas. These disguised spies later successfully entered the Communist guerrilla compounds and caused mounting casualties for both Korean and Chinese Communists. After a *Minsaeng-dan* agent was caught and made a false confession to indict some of the loyal Korean Communists as his agent colleagues, the Chinese Communists carried out a mass purge and in some cases executions of Korean Communist members. The Japanese police recorded that some 400 Korean Communists who escaped the mass purge surrendered to the Japanese police. There were also instances where the infuriated Korean Communists attacked and murdered Chinese Communists in retaliation for the indiscriminative and indiscrete purges. The *Minsaeng-dan* incident almost ended the joint Communist endeavor, and many Koreans left the Party for Siberia, or Korea, or simply defected to the Nationalist group or the Japanese.[18]

It is understandably in the interest of Chinese historians (ethnically Korean and Han alike) to make light of the reality of the *Minsaeng-dan* Incident. But what the incident and the general disunity within the "United Front" reveals is that the Koreans in Manchuria—as any significant populace would be—were much more complicated than a single mass with a unitary cause, be it Communism or resistance against Japanese rule.

The master narrative of Chinese nationalism brushes aside such complications when it tries to monopolize accounts of Korean resistance. It not only presumes that all resistance was under the leadership of the Communists, but that all Koreans welcomed this leadership or welcomed the resistance cause itself. Such presumption leaves those deviants particularly vulnerable. Without being given much context, the Koreans who fought against or sabotaged

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[15] Yanbian Chaoxianzu Zizhizhou di fang zhi bian zuan wei yuan hui, *Yanbian Chaoxianzu Zizhizhou Zhi* (Beijing: zhonghua shu zhu, 1996), 45.
[16] Hong-koo Han, "Wounded Nationalism: The Minseangdan Incident and Kim Il-Sung in Eastern Manchuria" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1999).
[17] Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement*, 279.
[18] Ibid, 280.

the Communist activities became spies and traitors who appear to have worked against the entire Chinese nation. But being real people as they were, the entire Chinese nation could not be easily conceived at that time, nor were they convinced that the very radical Communists who confiscated their properties were the Chinese nation's legitimate representatives.

MOTHERLAND VS. FATHERLAND

National loyalty pitted against ethnic loyalty

The proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and more importantly, the establishment of the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region in 1952 seem to mark the end of Korean Chinese history as independent of the Chinese nation. Yet, as Thongchai Wichakul argues in *Siam Mapped*, contrary to the general belief, the sealing of national borders always looks more real and clear-cut to those who reside in the nation's political, cultural and geographical metropole than to those who live in the national periphery.[19] The people who occupy the borderland may continue migrating for various social and economic reasons even after the border is formalized and sealed. This migration, regarded as defection in nationalistic language, often becomes something nationalism cannot tolerate and nationalist historiography has to try hard to suppress in order to uphold the "sacredness" of national borders and what it symbolizes, namely national sovereignty.

However, in the case of Korean Chinese, the national border is a superimposed and artificial boundary that only serves to disconnect the *danil minjok*, a term meaning "unitary people" which Koreans use to describe themselves.[20] Due to the ethnic, cultural, economic, and sometimes even familial ties across this artificial border, Koreans have more than once abandoned one side of the border for the other after that border was legally imposed and enforced. But in the "sacred" discourse of national sovereignty, this abandonment for many different reasons becomes simply and unforgivably a betrayal of national loyalty. Reflecting this change, the tacit taboo histories after the birth of the PRC, especially after the sealing of the Sino-North Korean border, also evolved from narratives of unwelcome foreigners to those of unfaithful national defectors.

With Japan's abrupt surrender in 1945, Manchuria suddenly became a power vacuum where both the Chinese Communists and the Kuomintang staged forceful comebacks for control. The Kuomintang, aided by US air force power, quickly took control of the major cities. The Communists also consolidated and expanded their "old liberated zones," including Yanbian, by redistributing the land abandoned by fleeing Japanese as well as Korean landlords and "collaborationists." The land reform and the active mobilization of formerly landless Korean peasants by Communist cadres soon rallied the remaining Koreans behind the Communist side in the Chinese Civil War that followed.[21] However, after the relationship between the two Communist brother states soured in the early 1960s, the Chinese state began

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[19] Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*, 12.

[20] Hyejin Kim, *Introduction to International Ethnic Networks and Intra-Ethnic Conflict* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) xx-xxi.

[21] Olivier, *The Implementation of China's Nationality Policy*, 55.

adamantly demanding that Korean Chinese demonstrate a clear-cut loyalty to the nation over ethnicity.

In Yanbian, the Anti-rightist Campaign against local nationalism started as early as 1958. It culminated in the Nationality Rectification Movement, which mounted a regression of the minority nationality policy and targeted Korean Chinese leaders including Chu Tok-hae in Yanbian who promoted ethnic identity among the Korean population. This political campaign later merged with the Great Leap Forward and the massive collectivization of land called the People's Communes. The political and cultural suppression coupled with the economic disaster brought by the Great Leap Forward forced many desperate Korean peasants and intellectuals to pack and cross over to North Korea, thus creating the first wave of "defectors" after the pronouncement of the "sacred" national borders.[22]

The disaster brought by the Great Leap Forward and hostile attitudes towards ethnic minorities saw respite only for five years between 1961-1966 before an even worse campaign: the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The Cultural Revolution renounced all the benign nationality policies previously implemented and also dismantled all nationality organizations in place at the time. The decade-long disaster is well known, but one of its direct consequences for the Korean Chinese is that it once again forced many Korean Chinese to flee to North Korea across the Tumen River.[23]

These two large-scale exoduses of Korean Chinese back to the peninsula, particularly the fleeing of some Korean Chinese Communist cadres, are part of the basis and evidence on which the charges of "local nationalism" and "spies" were brought against Chu Tok-hae and others in the wild frenzy of the Cultural Revolution years. But the end of Cultural Revolution did not end Chinese ultra-nationalism.

With the normalization of relations between China and South Korea in 1992, a large number of Korean Chinese have left China for their "ancestor land." Some went and are still going there for better wages, but many have settled there for good. According to South Korean Immigration Service figures, approximately 388,000 or one fifth of the whole population of Korean Chinese was estimated to be living in South Korea in the year 2009.[24] International marriage is also facilitating the permanent resettlement of a huge number of Korean Chinese women in South Korea. Kim notes that from 1992 to 2001, 47,500 marriages between South Korean men and Korean Chinese women took place. In the case of men, most Korean Chinese went to South Korea on a one- or two-year employment or business visa and remained in the country as illegal immigrants after their visas expired.[25]

In the context of China's opening up and embrace of a market economy, this international migration of Korean Chinese should not come as any shock. But what is reasonable is not always acceptable to all. The abruptness and scale of this loss of population have sent its first shockwaves across the government and Chinese academia. Starting around the early 2000s, a steady supply of studies on the population decrease of Korean Chinese in

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[22] Ibid, 122.
[23] Suh and Shultz, *Koreans in China*, 102.
[24] Kim, *International Ethnic Networks*, 30.
[25] Ibid, 31.

Yanbian is appearing in various regional as well as national journals.[26] Most studies have attributed the birth rate decrease to the ripple effect of the national "One Child" policy instead of the migration of young people, particularly young women. In Yanbian, the local government has rolled out a series of preferential policies such as financial rewards in favor of Korean Chinese to encourage them to increase population growth.[27]

However, the overall population in Yanbian is not decreasing but rather is increasing thanks to a large influx of Han migration. The autonomous prefecture government, by encouraging Korean Chinese population growth using discriminatory policies, is legally exerting its autonomous legislative power and implementing China's overall nationality policy. However, these preferential policies are fueling an outpouring of criticisms in the tacit taboo writings (most notably in forums and blogs that discuss the discriminatory policies). With the Korean Chinese population now comprising less than 30 percent of the total population of Yanbian, some views in the tacit taboo writings question the very necessity and legitimacy of the Autonomous Prefecture. Some point to the large number of Korean Chinese migrating to South Korea to argue that Chinese taxpayers' money is being wasted on solving problems that are not their (Han Chinese) fault, but problems due to the Korean Chinese unfaithfulness to their national identity.

Thus a circular logic appears to suggest that the Korean Chinese have historically been unfaithful to the national identity so they are now "defecting" to their ancestor homeland, and their "defecting" to their ancestor homeland now is yet another piece of evidence to show their unfaithfulness to the Chinese nation.

The previous exoduses have already been explained by the particularities of their context. Here Heyjin Kim's study on international ethnic networks aptly and sufficiently explains this latest migration wave. Kim documents that most Korean Chinese in Yanbian trace their ancestry to places in today's North Korea instead of South Korea.[28] Therefore the ancestor homeland is more figurative than literal, more of rhetoric than a fact. To understand exactly why such rhetoric is used, it makes sense to compare it with the case of the foreign (ethnic Han) investors settled in China, whose composition includes a huge number of those from Chinese diaspora communities in North America, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Most of those investors would identify ethnic identity as one important factor in their decision to put their money in China. Even the Chinese government stresses this ethnic dimension in luring them to come. But does that suggest that all the foreign (ethnically Chinese) investors are defectors from their home country? Kim also notes that South Koreans, when they first come to China for investment and business ventures, have first sought and are still seeking Korean Chinese help on the premise of ethnic solidarity. Now with many big Chinese cities having Korea towns, does that indicate those South Koreans living in China are less patriotic than their counterparts living in South Korea? In any of these cases, the underlying logic for international migration is clearly an economic one; yet, from

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[26] Piao Meilan, "The Nature and Characteristics of the Population Decrease among Korean Chinese in Yanbian in the Age of Globalization" *dongjiang xuekan* 29.1 (2012).
[27] see http://www.ybnews.cn/news/local/201212/177910.html
[28] Kim, *International Ethnic Networks*, 47.

the perspective of ultra-nationalism, an ethnically different people somehow always have the extra burden of proving their loyalty to the national identity.

CONCLUSION

The idea that something as essentialist as ethnicity and nationality could be a social/historical construct is probably unthinkable for ultra-nationalists or those nationalist historians who see their primary roles as guardians of "patriotism" and "nationalism." As this paper has argued through looking at the Korean Chinese past in its manifold historical contingency and complexity, what is national identity for them but a set of values that were formed historically and culturally? The ethnic bond may also be a social/historical construct, but it at least predates the national identity and therefore reasonably takes precedence for some. Nationalist historians as well as those writers of the tacit taboos, by imposing the robust "national identity" of our time retrospectively to the people of a time when such an identity was in its infancy or simply non-existent, are contributing to a discourse that is totalizing, monolithic, and notoriously intolerant of historical contingencies and deviants.

In the case of a diaspora people like the Korean Chinese, whose integration into the Chinese nation is recent enough to be perceptively visible, this intolerable discourse amounts to imposing a version of historical "Puritanism" in which contingencies are suppressed and deviants are subjected to occasions of "witch-hunt." Diaspora peoples are now quickly emerging in many parts of the world. The Korean Chinese are by no means the first to be having such a history: Japanese Americans who suffered from the notorious "Internment" during World War II also experienced the extra burden of proving their loyalty to the national identity. This extra burden went as far as restricting them to a no-third-option choice between either staying imprisoned in the "Internment" camps or proving loyalty to the nation by fighting against their own ethnic brethren. There existed little—if any—middle ground.

Now with many South Koreans permanently settling down in China, their offspring are forming a new people called "new Korean Chinese" (*xinxianzu*).[29] The historical/social construction of their "national identity" is only at its very beginning. It is illuminating that their identity at this early stage is still very much contingent on myriad factors and can only hope to be solidified in time and with tolerance for deviants and deviant developments.

Nationalist historiography's impulse to impose a set of values that we now generalize as "national identity" retrospectively to historical times when such values were as foreign to a people as their own foreign status could be, risks reducing history to a narrative that borders more closely on political fiction than historical fact. Nationalist historians reduce contingencies to a minimum, so that a master narrative can emerge and somehow illuminate or reveal the truth of a historical teleology. But this aversion to contingency reinforces the false idea that people always possess the best judgment or a particular self-awareness at any given historical time. By sketching out the larger international context that characterized Northeast Asia in the first half of 20th century, this paper has argued that historical contingencies often overpower and confuse individuals more than they illuminate for them any teleological trajectory of history. This is not to say that history should never pass

[29] Kim, *International Ethnic Networks*, 15.

judgment on people of the past, but that we should acknowledge any such judgment is speculative. To make the speculative endeavor of historical research come nearer to what truly was the case, contingencies and complexities should be recognized and restored rather than suppressed.

Through examining the case of Korean Chinese and their portrayal by official historical records and tacit taboo histories alike, and consulting scholarship of those historians who work outside the nationalist paradigm and those historians who are not writing within a certain national boundary, this paper has demonstrated these limitations of nationalistic historiography. It is in the spirit of overcoming such limitations and the often "master" treatment of historical subjects (people) as mere objects for emplotment that this paper argues for the historians' mission not simply as constructing better historical narratives but also as seeking consciously to subject the narrative constructs, emplotment, and positionality of their own and those of their colleagues to critical interrogation.

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Website links to the tacit taboo histories listed in the beginning of the paper:

(1) Yanbian Incident epitomizes the utter failure of the state’s Family Planning and nationality policies: http://bbs.tianya.cn/post-worldlook-646384-1.shtml.

(2) The Korean soldiers in the Nanjing Massacre, tell you the true nature of the Korean: http://bbs.junzhuan.com/thread-1729168-1-1.html.

(3) The atrocious Koreans in the Nanjing Massacre: http://www.360doc.com/content/13/0217/13/11532035_266124903.shtml.