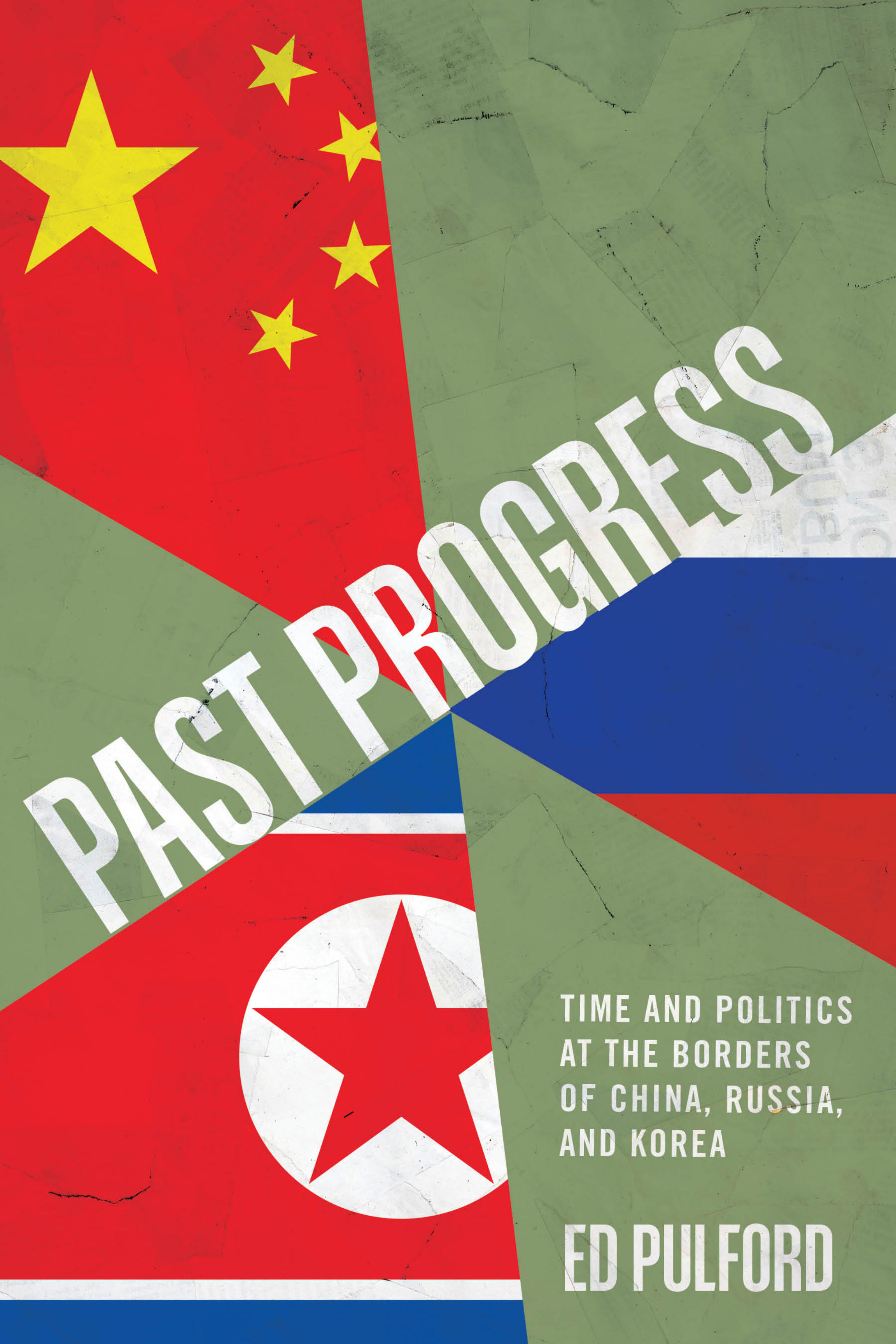

PAST PROGRESS
TIME AND POLITICS AT THE BORDERS OF CHINA, RUSSIA, AND KOREA
ED PULFORD

Past Progress

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Past Progress

Time and Politics at the Borders of China, Russia, and Korea

ED PULFORD

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Any deficiencies in what follows are not the responsibility of anyone mentioned here.

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LINGUISTIC CONVENTIONS

Original language terms are used throughout this book where deemed useful. Chinese is denoted by (Ch.), Russian (Rus.) and Korean (Kor.) and, infrequently, Manchu (Man.) Japanese (Ja.), and Ukrainian (Ukr.). These are omitted where it is obvious from context which language is being used.

Chinese words are written in the body text using standard pinyin transcription.

Korean is rendered using McCune-Reischauer (M-R) romanization. While the official South Korean Revised Romanization system is preferred by some, I have chosen M-R because a version of it is still current in North Korea and Yanbian, China. Further, where words differ in spelling or pronunciation in the DPRK/Yanbian compared to South Korea, the former has been used, e.g., *ryŏksa* (martyr) not *yŏksa*, Rajin not Najin etc.

For Chinese and, where relevant, Korean and Japanese, a glossary for cross-referencing pinyin/M-R terms with their characters is provided as an appendix. Occasionally Sinographs or Hangeul/Chosŏn'gŭl are used in the body text where they have immediate analytical relevance.

Russian is transcribed using the American Library Association-Library of Congress (ALA-LC) system. Based on personal preference, in place and personal names I have omitted the apostrophe ['] denoting a soft sign and have rendered Cyrillic [e] and [ë] as *ye* and *yo* where it seems important that readers know how a name is actually pronounced (thus *Primorye* instead of *Primor'e*, *Posyot* instead of *Pos'et* etc.). Elsewhere these characters have been transcribed as ALA-LC normally requires.

Manchu, where cited (mostly secondhand references from English- or Chinese-language texts) is transliterated following the Möllendorff system. At times, words (mostly toponyms) with a Manchu or other Tungusic origin are only

extant in the historical record in Sinographs. In such cases I settle for transcribing these into pinyin. Japanese is transcribed according to the Hepburn system.

Persons and places with established transliterated names that do not conform to the above, for example St. Petersburg, Tolstoy, Kim Il Sung, or Seoul, have been retained as such. East Asian personal names, be they historical persons or cited authors, have been rendered surname-first except in cases where a scholar publishes in English under given-name-first ordering.

All translations are my own except where otherwise specified.

Past Progress

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INTRODUCTION

Progresses Past and Present

Being the outgoing type, madamae[1] was keenly interested in all the concentric circles of events that radiated out around her. Much of what she observed, from new products in her hometown Hunchun to infrastructural developments in Yanbian prefecture and Jilin province, and national achievements across China, indicated that life was improving. Indeed, the only real clouds on this expansive horizon loomed at the most grandiose and the most mundane ends of the spectrum as, in their own ways, global geopolitics and the leak that her anthropologist houseguest had somehow caused in her bathroom threatened to pincer her cheery outlook. During the months in 2014–15 that I spent living with madamae in Hunchun, which lies in a Korean region of China on the country's northeastern borders with Russia and North Korea,[2] our conversations flitted seamlessly between affairs at these various scales of focus. Warp to the weft of a home life of studying, cooking, eating, socializing, watching television, and visits from madamae's Korean- and Chinese-speaking friends and family, the macro and the micro collapsed together, and so even the most abstract international matters entered the intimate confines of her light- and houseplant-filled apartment.

Our days together would usually begin with a dawn visit to the East Market, where madamae rhapsodized at the range of goods on offer. Aside from the natural greens from the wooded hills around Hunchun, every conceivable vegetable and animal product was now available and affordable. "Even beggars can eat meat these days," she said, adding that local people's palates had expanded to

include Russian and North Korean seafood, and dishes from distant southern China.

When her daughter, son-in-law, and twelve-year-old grandson came to visit on evenings and weekends, madamae would marvel at the extracurricular activities Byŏngnam had been volunteered for, from Chinese flute (*dizi*) to supplementary English composition classes. Young people had so many opportunities these days: Byŏngnam's exhausted expression presumably just showed that he lacked the historical perspective to see how lucky he was.

Like much of Hunchun's population, madamae's family belonged to China's ethnically Korean (Kor. *Chosŏnjok*, Ch. *Chaoxianzu*) community, and so peninsular matters were high on the conversational agenda at home. No one had a particularly positive opinion of Kim Jong Un, but madamae did think his wife was beautiful and felt North Korea deserved China's help in resisting American imperialism. Indeed, as an avid viewer of China Central Television's national Xinwen lianbo news show, on at 7:00 p.m. each evening after the local Yanbian TV Korean-language news, she knew that US meddling was an issue for China too. "Why can't America or Japan just respect the world's second biggest economy and its technology, now admired by Africans, Europeans, Asians, and the Soviets alike?" madamae wondered, using a term still commonly applied to Russians in northeast China. US "provocations" in the South China Sea were a cause of particular indignation.

But it was an aqueous rather than a maritime incident that offered clearest evidence of the fact that—in borderland settings like Hunchun—the local is often international. The leak, caused by cracks in the bathtub where I showered, and grounds for loud stairwell rows between madamae and her—also Chosŏnjok—downstairs neighbor had been a problem for a while, and eventually some men came to inspect it. Madamae at first mistook one of them for a fellow Korean. But her respectful greeting, *annyŏnghasupnikka*, fell on deaf ears: he was Han Chinese, he said apologetically, ancestrally from Shandong province, though he added by way of consolation that he had at least been to North Korea. People there seemed politer than in China, he felt, but for some reason they use US dollars for everything and eat food donated from here: perhaps their Military First policy means they give all their money to the army, but either way they're not very developed. The plumber had got a similar impression of the other neighbors when, before marrying in the 1980s, he had spent three years working in

the USSR. How could the Soviets be so unable to look after themselves that he and other Hunchun people had to go and do construction there? It was baffling. Construction was key to a country's success, he reflected, and neither the Soviets nor the Koreans were doing too well at that these days. But this thought perhaps reminded him of what he was in the apartment for, and he hurried to help his repairman colleague, who was now sprawled clanking around under the bathtub.

The plumber's comments both exemplified the cross-border perspective of many ordinary people in Hunchun today and alluded tellingly to the (post)socialist forces that have redefined relations between China, Russia, and Korea, and wrought dizzying changes to Hunchun's place in national, regional, and global affairs in recent decades. As phenomena that speak to anthropological concerns over how time is understood in the context of grand state projects and across international borders, such themes will be central to this book. Indeed, my very presence in the town further reflected these transformational trends. The name of the surrounding Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture means "along the border" and thus suggests a certain remoteness, but gaggles of cosmopolitan outsiders, from the central PRC authorities to officials, businesspeople, journalists, and researchers from numerous countries, have of late been descending on Hunchun, performing the "opening up" of this formerly out-of-the-way locale. Some of this began well before I started conducting fieldwork here in 2013, as from the 1990s state-backed initiatives sought to make Hunchun a transnational hub for postsocialist Northeast Asian cooperation. Discussed further below, this improbable ambition at the nexus of three countries with discordant approaches to borders, mobility, and capital was a spark for my own anthropological and historical interest in this cultural and geopolitical crossroads.

A true high point in Yanbian's rise to prominence came in July 2015 when, much to madamae's delight, none other than Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping arrived on an inspection tour. For two days around the visit she sat glued to the television and her mobile phone, scanning social media app WeChat for evidence that he would appear in Hunchun. "He has to see the triple border at Fangchuan," she said, referring to the spot where China, North Korea, and Russia all actually meet, now a popular tourist site. Rumors of Xi's arrival had sparked a flurry of anticipatory activity throughout town, including the re-asphalting of road near the bus station that seemed not to need re-asphalting, and the hanging of hundreds of red PRC flags on wires across the streets. But

FIGURE I.1: Xi Jinping in Yanbian. Retrieved from Hunchun local government public WeChat account; additional source in endnote 4.

such efforts failed to conjure Xi, whose itinerary remained limited to prefectural capital Yanji around 70 km away, and some nearby farms. As this reality sank in late on the second day, madamae's spirits dipped, and after bedtime that evening I could still hear her through the wall rewatching a shaky seven-second video snatched on one Yanji resident's phone. In the clip Xi strolled the streets surrounded by twirling female dancers in Korean *chosŏn'ot*,[3] an emissary from the center vaunted at the nation's margins. Buttressing this impression, bucolic "ethnic" elements featured in imagery shared on local government WeChat accounts during the visit (fig. I.1).[4] Other Chinese Korean friends of mine reacted more sarcastically, coding mockery of Xi's theatrical leadership cult by referring to him as *Sŭp Taedae* 습대대, a nonsensical Chosŏn'gŭl rendering of his official Chinese nickname Xi Dada ("Daddy Xi"). But madamae, who saw in Xi echoes of her favorite leader Mao Zedong, was amazed he had been so close to her long-neglected hometown.

Taken together, these diffuse notes on events large and small in Hunchun lead to an observation that will be key to this book's focus on time and its shifting anthropological meanings at various political scales: the tumultuous changes that have brought material abundance, high-level attention, and

shifting border-crossing opportunities to Hunchun have, for many among the town's multiethnic Korean, Han Chinese, Russian, and Manchu population, engendered a particular worldview tethered to ideas of "progress." Borne along by senses of outward expansivism and forward movement which exist in both official and vernacular forms, Hunchun people today commonly understand their transforming material and sociopolitical lives, and relations with cross-border neighbors, in terms of "development" (Ch. *fazhan*, Kor. *palchŏn*); the "construction" (*jianshe*, *kŏnsŏl*) invoked by the plumber; and "progress" (*jinbu*, *chinbo*) itself. In doing so they engage a distinctive borderland variant of a mood that has pervaded China over the past three decades. As anthropologists and other scholars of Chinese historical and temporal experience have noted, increased wealth, infrastructural improvement, and constant building have fed into a nationwide affect which Anna Greenspan (2014) calls "futurity," sweeping up hundreds of millions of people in a whorl of change. In a state whose economy was, until the 2020s, growing by 8–10 percent annually, even the blandest efforts by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to yoke everyday change to official visions of national advancement have gained vernacular credence. Such tendencies have emerged in other developmentalist postsocialist settings too: as Erik Harms (2016: 32) notes, residents of transforming Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, interpret the construction (and destruction) around them in terms that echo government and corporate narratives, even if "no one ever forced anyone to tell the story in this way." The idea of grand-scale progress attracts less everyday cynicism or ambivalence in reformed socialist contexts today than it does in, for example, Euro-America or the former Soviet Union. Straightforwardly depoliticized and culturally non-relativized framings of progress abound in China, shorn of analyses that might interrogate progress's costs or ask whether all of society's class, ethnic, or other constituencies benefit equally. As in Vietnam, a public trained for decades in socialist critiques of capitalism nevertheless enthuses about processes that interloping intellectuals might call "neoliberal" (Harms 2016: 6).

Yet if much of this is as present in Hunchun as elsewhere, progress also acquires a distinctive borderland valence here. Evident along two interrelated axes, this distinctiveness results both from how incongruent this positivism is within Hunchun's historical setting, and from how sharply it contrasts with the atmosphere over state borders. It is precisely this that makes Hunchun an ideal setting from which to ask questions about progress-rooted thinking,

questions that apply well beyond the northeast Chinese, or the postsocialist, context.

Firstly, if Hunchun presents rosy prospects to many among its municipal population of 229,000 today (Jilin 2018), then even cursory consideration of local borderland pasts makes such views surprising. Today's pervasive progressivism builds substantially on teleological notions of advancement which were shared by both the Cold War's twentieth-century "camps" but were promoted with particular force under Chinese, Soviet, and Korean state socialisms. As a result, with Maoist, Soviet, and Kimist utopian orthodoxies each having crumbled since the 1980s, Hunchun has had a unique vantage point on the illusory promises of linear historical thinking. Even if the three variously postsocialist states which today sandwich the town continue to pose revisionist challenges to the late-capitalist "West's" sense of where history is going, these lack the ideological, intellectual, or internationalist coherence of high socialism. Still more strikingly, Hunchun's deeper—but not distant—local pasts offer further examples of progress's shortcomings in numerous cultural and political inflections. Before Cold War historical materialism, this was a key site within the conquest-evolutionist nineteenth- to twentieth-century Russian and Japanese empires, and before that the seventeenth- to eighteenth-century flourishing of Manchu-Qing and Korean Chosŏn states under cyclical visions of dynastic rise and decline. With these grand endeavors also having come up short, the town's main demographic groups, be they Chosŏnjok (36%), Han Chinese (Ch. *Hanzu*, 53%), Manchu (Ch. *Manzu*, 10%), or Russian (a visible minority of several hundred) (Jilin 2018), have witnessed a three-hundred-year cascade of sometimes compatible, sometimes discordant visions of expansion and advancement: cross-border state socialism's demise was only the most recent "end of history" to reverberate here.

This leads to my second observation regarding progress's distinctiveness in Hunchun. In a multiethnic borderland like this, seemingly depoliticized and deculturalized visions of improvement and advancement like those sweeping China today are forcibly politicized and culturized through everyday contact with other temporal frames across international and interethnic boundaries, and backwards through time. The nearby Sino-Korean and Sino-Russian borders (drawn in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively) are linear inscriptions of Hunchun's long-standing status as a site of convergence for lofty imperial-national endeavors, but collisions among these have invariably

emerged in more prosaically haphazard form on the ground. As Marshall Sahlins (1985: viii) notes—drawing on a historically momentous episode when indigenous Hawaiians met and killed British imperial navigator Captain Cook—everyday cross-cultural encounters that occur amid epochal historical change are, for ordinary people, both "confrontation[s] with an external world that has its own imperious determinations *and* with other people who have their own parochial intentions" (my stress). Over time Chinese, Korean, Russian, and Manchu people around Hunchun have both lived out grand statist or imperial projects of progress and expansion, and interacted in vernacular ways with representatives of other linguistic, cultural, and ethnic groups. These multi-scalar encounters have lent rich local texture to imperious, expansive temporal ideas. As I will show, it is precisely everyday manifestations of progressive notions in a variety of culturally and ideologically inflected forms that have made them so tenacious, both within communities and as pivots in cross-border relationships.

Hunchun people over time have thus engaged with a succession of what Ann Stoler, Carole McGranahan, and Peter Perdue (2007) call "imperial formations." Allowing comparison among "empires" beyond "fetishized" Western archetypes (Shih 2011), Stoler et al.'s anthro-historical framing encourages us to trace continuities and connections among apparently disparate colonial, national, socialist, or capitalist projects and their shared expansionist impulses to forge fields of meaning, dispossession, and dominance, including in the temporal realm. For many in and around Hunchun today, being propelled to the center of intersecting official and media gazes seems a significant break with a local sense of remoteness within such projects. If one has internalized the perspective of a given political center, seeing the world in terms of discrete, bordered polities—as government cadres, journalists, many social scientists, and indeed modern subjects at large do—then Hunchun looks destined to have played a marginal role in political, social, and economic schemes sweeping northeast Asia since the town's 1714 foundation as a Qing garrison. Of course, for its own population this is the center of countless domestic and parochial worlds. But local multiethnic residents have all been interpolated over the last three centuries by imperious views that locate the focus of authentic "national" stories elsewhere. *Bianjiang* or "frontier" remains a common term used locally to describe this area,[5] suggesting that, much as China came to be seen as Oriental by Chinese people themselves under nineteenth-century Euro-American spatial hegemony (Xiaomei Chen 1995), Hunchun

people have had their sense of place peripheralized by state-centrism. Until the 1990s, entering the town required that one show a border pass (*bianjingzheng*) proving residency as fears of Soviet or North Korean spies created a sealed-off (*fengbi*) atmosphere.[6] Yet, as Stoler and McGranahan (2007: 10) argue, even if a polity's strained efforts to assert itself at its margins may reflect the paranoia of imperial failure, perceived edge spaces are often where a formation's most intensely revealing work of arranging, categorizing, and dislocating occurs. Hunchun people's engagements with progress over time straddle these mutually constituting poles of marginality and centrality to wider projects, producing entangled temporal and spatial effects: recent movement into an age of material plenty and openness is experienced both as a forward leap in time, and as a shift in imagined location from periphery to vanguard of national and—given the proximity of borders—international affairs. This emic sense of emergence to the front stage, far from the first in Hunchun's history, serves its own injunction to study politically inflected experiences of time here.

With contemporary life in Hunchun as a starting point, this book thus focuses on the cross-border inflections and layered histories of progress as a component of identity on multiple scales. In doing so I show that—here and across space and time—progress should be understood as an idea that is as local as it is transnational, as concrete as it is abstract, and as cultural as it is philosophical. Like narratives of history and regimes of difference, grand temporalizing ideas are widely understood to radiate out from political and intellectual centers. But for all the power and ambition of Chinese, Soviet, and Korean socialisms and Russian, Japanese, and Qing empires since the seventeenth century, their existence alone does not explain how progress became a compelling everyday framework for Hunchun people to understand their worlds, nor why it has endured despite the serial collapses of projects enacted in its name. There are today many global locations—including the old Cold War "West"—where progressivist visions endure despite the passing of modernist or imperial projects. But this borderland, where an extraordinary profusion of projects has converged, collided, overlapped, and collapsed, is uniquely suited for a "geological" approach to successive imperial formations and the layered effects that their domineering structures, cultural labor, and vernacular engagements produce (Stoler and McGranahan 2007: xi). Ethnographic study of Hunchun-rooted experiences across time provides a context from which to ask why, as Anna

Tsing (2005: 21) observes dramatically, "progress still controls us even in tales of ruination."

In answering this question in this book, I examine a geographical space that is centered on Hunchun but also encompasses adjacent parts of Russia and Korea (map fig. I.3) and a time frame spanning postsocialist, socialist, and imperial eras. In what is also a new kind of history of this pivotal Sino-Russo-Korean locale, I focus on both the production and the narration of temporal and political life. Historical-anthropological approaches encourage us to see telling history as a means of making political claims on the world (McGranahan 2012). Viewing the telling of time in the same way allows me to show how and why locally constructed senses of temporal movement are vital in shaping senses of Self and Other, and relations across boundaries of personal, regional, cultural, and national difference. Hunchun's diverse local inhabitants have for generations been more than simply spectators at a series of geopolitical spectacles directed from elsewhere. Their role as protagonists in dramas that disrupt widely assumed divisions between center and periphery, vernacular and official, helps us see how progress, development, and modernity gain meaning in everyday life, and endure across shifts from one historical order to the next. Lives lived here are of course more than refractions of grand progressive schemes, and the textures of everyday temporal experience far exceed the bounds imposed by state or imperial architects. But insights into political life's temporal inflections in light of such schemes are especially important in a contemporary global era of interethnic, international, and intercultural contact when most people—regardless of location—live amid the ruins of twentieth-century progressivisms on the frontiers of China-driven socioeconomic transformation. On the way to further discussion of what is at stake here, and this study's implications beyond the present-day Hunchun triple border, I return briefly to madamae's apartment and socialist time.

Even if the plumber was not Korean, he was, unlike many in town today, at least an old Hunchun person,[7] and so could indulge madamae's reflections on how different things had been in bygone days. The place was so dirty (*maitai*), they recalled. During her youth, madamae's family lived in a small brick house with an earthen floor, actually quite practical given all the dirt, and kept a guard dog and chickens. By today's standards, these were "backward" (*luohou*) conditions. For

all madamae's admiration of Mao, moreover, the period of the Chairman's rule (1949–1976)—particularly his cultish apotheosis during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976)—was gripped by frenetic campaigns and bouts of anti-foreign violence, which especially threatened "minority" borderland residents like the Chosŏnjok (then actually still a majority of Hunchun's population).

Yet the grimy Maoist past, in some ways best left behind, has a complicated relationship with today's visions of progress. On one hand, advancement out of those dark days meant madamae now enjoyed once-unimaginable luxuries. Rice containing five different grains, near-limitless cabbage and radish kimchi, and fried *ch'algubi* red bean pancakes were once outlandish indulgences. But materiality had bred materialism, she felt. Neighborhood weddings were now serious expenses, given the hundreds of RMB expected as cash gifts. People fell out over business deals, and swindlers (*pianren*) were legion in Hunchun. Contemporary society's cutthroat competitiveness meant that Byŏngnam, for all his erudition, faced constant exam pressure. Progress had also taken madamae's son away from her to an exhausting job in the port city Dalian, where, as she understood it, he was in constant danger of losing his job. The TV serials we watched together after the news most evenings brought these realities starkly home. Set in China's glittering coastal megacities, plots were full of extramarital affairs and people being fired: "This is what happens in your capitalist countries," she would say to me as we sat on the sofa, reaching over to hit me with the back of her hand. "This is not socialism." With the "iron rice bowl" (*tie fanwan*), a Mao-era system of secure employment and basic social security, long gone, madamae agreed with the plumber that North Korea, which she had visited several times, had retained a socialist gentility that China now lacked. She still seemed to enjoy hate-watching the serials though.

The Maoist past's presence as a wistfully recalled age of material poverty but moral purity is redolent of other nostalgic (post)socialist contexts (Boym 2002). But where progress is concerned, there is a recursive tidiness to descriptions of those years as "backward." Such a framing is notable because it was precisely under Mao that linear progress-oriented understandings of time and history attained much of their contemporary inflection for Hunchun people. With a kind of uniform intensity never achieved by any previous Chinese state, post-1949 education and media promoted a way of thinking about time as a Maoist-Marxist-materialist rush away from the fragmented "feudal" past into

a glittering coherent future of socialism and national glory. These ideas built on earlier national/imperial foundations and cross-border analogues whose entanglements in Hunchun will be central concerns of this book. Today's post-Mao Chinese visions of progress rest, as Yan Hairong (2008: 40) notes, on a sense of expansive abundance quite different from futures projected from the 1950s to the 1970s, and at times, as Biao Xiang (2021: 241–242) observes, development—rather than any particular end-state—appears to be an abstract goal in itself. Yet the CCP under Xi Jinping continues to speak the language of big-*H* Marxist History, and citizens from the coastal metropolises to the borderlands remain stuck on progress. With socialist forwardism repurposed for an age of capital-driven developmental rush, high socialist linear historicism, and thus the Mao era's role as a precursor as well as a counterpoint, remains crucial for understanding the textured time frames that inform people's contemporary outlooks here.

It is in this context that madamae's invocations of progress served, for good or ill, as integral to how she understood changes over the course of her life, including shifting relationships with different people from the borderlands and beyond. Yanbian prefecture was created in 1952[8] by a Chinese government on land recently occupied by the Japanese and historically sacred to Manchus, but the Hunchun of madamae's youth was an almost exclusively Korean locale. Even today, many Chosŏnjok over fifty do not speak Chinese well, although sixty-five-year-old madamae was an exception, having lived in Inner Mongolia, where she was tricked into joining a fake brigade of Maoist Red Guards in the late 1960s.[9] This ordeal, and the language she had learned tilling land alongside Sinophone local Mongols, had since proven unexpectedly useful, for while the family spoke Yanbian Korean at home, Byŏngnam, despite attending one of Hunchun's several Korean-medium schools, preferred to respond to his elders in the Chinese he used with his friends.

Unsurprisingly, such cultural creep—ushered in by Han influxes into, and a Chosŏnjok exodus from, Hunchun in the post-Mao era—is read by older Chosŏnjok as impingement from an increasingly imperious outside world: "He's like a Han spy [*tewu*] in our house," madamae would say of Byŏngnam, only half joking. Amid this sociocultural form of what climate philosopher Glenn Albrecht (2005) calls "solastalgia"—a sense of environmental dislocation felt not because of moving but because one's surrounds have transformed—it was especially ironic that the often-xenophobic and hardly scam-free Mao years had

equipped madamae with the language she now used to interact with her own recalcitrant grandson and a sojourning "capitalist" foreigner (we used Korean, which I was still learning, less often). But during my fieldwork it became clear that the tangled threads of progress and its discontents offered her a means to narrate her own position and selfhood. Our conversations about socialism and capitalism, China's place in the world, or Hunchun's "backward" past were what Gail Hershatter (2011: 3) calls "good-enough stories," not necessarily complete or internally consistent but plausible means for madamae to commentate on our encounter, me as a White British researcher of unaccustomed height who spent too much time with Russian and Han friends and shuttling to and from Yanji for Korean lessons, and her as a Chosŏnjok grandmother, retired telegraphist, nostalgic Maoist, quondam borderland trader, sympathizer with nearby North Koreans, attendee at group keyboard classes, and keen socialite. A vernacular sense of movement through time was for madamae, and many others I have spent time with here over the past decade, a yardstick for reckoning with geographical and cultural difference. I now elaborate further on this important theme as it applies on various scales in the chapters that follow.

Progress, Borders, and Difference

This book's argument that trajectory through time is a key pivot in relationships across difference shows how personal and state relations are often inseparable in multiethnic border spaces. But while entangled, these different scales of relationship each have their own analytical importance. Interpersonally, as Johannes Fabian (1983) showed in the 1980s, the temporalities and historicities of relationships are key concerns for anthropologists who long failed to see their cross-cultural interlocutors as "coevals" inhabiting the same historical moment. While taking this idea seriously as a practical principle, I also demonstrate its value beyond the ethnographic encounter, showing how coevalness applies as a general framing for everyday human relations across borders and the vernacular structures of temporal feeling that arise amid grand political projects. Anthropological and historical interest in the variety and comparability of these projects and their everyday temporal reverberations also has wider applicability at the international scale. As in many other global locations, northeast Asia's nineteenth-century collision with European colonial modernity jolted

the region's polities and peoples into a new kind of violent simultaneity with one another and with the rest of the world (Kracauer 1969), sparking crises over the need to "catch up" with advanced nations as recognized historical actors (Morris-Suzuki et al. 2013). These are ongoing, for as Dai Jinhua (2018: 4) remarks, "a sense of 'time'—world history or so-called linear historical time" remains critical in shaping the self-consciousness of people and nations: in China the epithet "backward" is as often used, as madamae did, to refer to bygone local pasts as it is to label less "developed" foreign places.

As noted already, progress's enduring centrality to how people and states measure their relative positions is particularly striking around Hunchun, given the idea's serial local failures over the past 150 years. But this applies globally too. On both sides of twentieth-century socialist/capitalist divides, and during the earlier totalitarian and colonial projects that overlapped with them, ambitions to instantiate "modernity" and "Enlightenment" have come up short. Today the promise of linear improvement seems remote in an inchoate age when even the "post-"ness of "postsocialism" or "post–Cold War" seem outdated (Buyandelgeriyn 2008). Western European and North American societies' newfound anxieties over democratic "backsliding" or atavistic reawakenings of dark chapters of the past—from Roman decadence (Pop 1995) to Europe's troubled 1810s (Whitmore 2015) or 1930s—have seen them join former-socialist citizenries who are more used to murky temporal trajectories. The effects of socialism's ends have been particularly acute in eastern Russia and North Korea, and, even if China's "rise" makes progressivist ideas credible for hundreds of millions, postindustrial decline in the country's northeast warps such macro-level visions of national ascent around Hunchun. But however distinctive, the diverse "unmakings" (Humphrey 2002) of multiple state socialisms rent comparable temporal ruptures in daily life across a vast canvas of Eurasian locations.

In light of this, many scholars have unsurprisingly sought to expose the shortcomings of progressive projects under various ideological banners, in both their theory and their practical execution. From philosophical dissection of Enlightenment thought's destructive impulse, which—however necessary for modernity's totalizing transformations—may ultimately turn in on itself (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997), to cultural critique of how modernist rationalism leads to the freezing of time and capitalist elite capture (Harvey 1990), and sociological-anthropological dismantling of capitalist and socialist modernization projects

(Scott 1998) and life amid their ruins (Tsing 2005), the illusory promises of progress have been bared widely in recent decades. Time, as Felix Ringel (2021: 98) notes from postindustrial former East Germany, appears "out of tune" as a component of contemporary human experience, making progress a slippery subject of inquiry.

My work in this book is in sympathy with these critiques, but approaches their object in a new way, exploring the complexities they expose not so much as detractions from the idea of progress but rather as explanations in themselves for why it remains tenacious. Study of the temporal inflections of Hunchun-centered relations among Chinese, Korean, Russian, Manchu, and Japanese people during postsocialist, socialist (c. 1920–1991), Japanese imperial (1905–45), and late-Qing (1636–1911) moments reveals progress as a pivotal, but also a more textured, culturally freighted and polyvalent idea than its slick first-glance associations with linear forward and outward movement, elevated prosperity, and national greatness would suggest. As Harms's (2016: 5) abovementioned work shows within a single national context, cascading developmental projects can yoke collapse and optimism closely together as the rubble of the old and the luxury of the new appear indistinguishable cyphers of newness. But in this borderland setting, human complexity is to be found not only in the externalities of progress's failures or paradoxes but also in the pulsing positivist heart of the entire project. Paralleling Adorno and Horkheimer's (1997) dissection of modernity's mythologies, I will show that distinctly nonlinear elements were always embedded within supposedly rationalist visions of progress, before, during, and since the Chinese, Soviet, and Korean socialisms that linger in everyday temporalities around Hunchun today. Progress's initial appeal may lie in its purity, but its long-term tenacity, particularly as a pivot in cross-border relations, owes as much to these inherent textures as to the complexities of failure.

Given the entanglement of personal and state relations here, my ethnographic localism and attention to diverse imperial formations does not downplay the relevance to Hunchun of grand linear visions propagated globally following Europe's eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Supercharged under nineteenth-century industrial-capitalist imperialism, evolutionist paradigms from the social and natural sciences of figures like Karl Marx, Charles Darwin, and Lewis Henry Morgan constructed an intellectual juggernaut of progress, development, growth, and expansion. In the thinking that traveled with, and purported to justify, European colonialism, organisms, economies and social groups alike,

all classified under taxonomy-heavy Enlightened thinking, became progressive units as History, Nation, Man, and Individual "announced their timeless universality with capital letters" (Anagnost 1997: 8). With the delineation of bounded nations and states inextricably part of this classificatory endeavor, progress became a national project, although its universalism was selective. Under European empire, only "advanced" metropoles possessed Historical agency, while colonized locations were denied both political and temporal sovereignty on the basis of their "backwardness" (Chakrabarty 2000). Twentieth-century anticolonial movements thus sought to wrest control over both time and space from imperial clutches, although this only reaffirmed the hegemony of progressive linear History as a frame for independent action. Resisting imposed modernity demanded mimetic emulation, and so as twentieth-century states, whether post-colonist or postcolonial, socialist or capitalist, took shape and people came to identify with these progressive polities, citizen-subjects learned to perceive their counterparts across borders as agents of their own forward-moving Histories. On both vernacular and state scales, therefore, progress emerged as an intrinsic feature of cross-border relationships. Nowhere was this more evident than in state socialist countries that enacted history's most ambitious and totalizing efforts to bring linear Enlightenment ideas to life.

Hunchun's Koreans, Han, Russians, and Manchus thus all inhabit cultural worlds with tangled lines of inheritance back to these framings of progress. Consequently, this book is informed throughout by work on the often-violent spread of evolutionist thinking (Bear 2014), the crafting of modern publics, and invocations of progress as grounds for industrial proletarianization at home and "civilizing" settler-colonial projects abroad (Appadurai 1996; Williams 2006), as well as class- and nation-rooted struggles to resist these. Thinking with the subaltern studies school in particular offers critical tools for understanding time as a component of "national" experience (Chatterjee 1993), and excavating accreted layers of linear temporality and progressive nationhood around Hunchun. Well before postsocialist Chinese developmentalism, Chinese, Korean and Soviet socialisms, or even Russian and Japanese empires, northeast Asia was home to cohesive quasi-"national" communities (Elliott 2001) and has seen some of the world's most successful efforts to adopt the co-constitutive ideas of progress and bordered Westphalian-style statehood. Consonant with the widespread embrace of progress among ordinary citizens, the PRC state itself today unapologetically

reproduces narratives of civilizational uplift, which evoke both the hierarchies touted by European colonists and dynastic-era "civilizing projects" (Harrell 1995) from China's official national past. Xi Jinping's borderland tours unfold at the same time as "development" in Tibet (Yeh 2013) and "settlement" in Xinjiang (Cliff 2016) are cast as gifts to the benighted ethnic edges from a "modern" Han-identified cosmic metropole.

Yet for all Hunchun people's connections to formal progressivisms identified with imperial centers, historical Europe, or today's PRC internal colonizer-state, local experience here is primary for two reasons. Firstly, whether in cross-border capitalist, twentieth-century socialist internationalist, or early-modern imperial

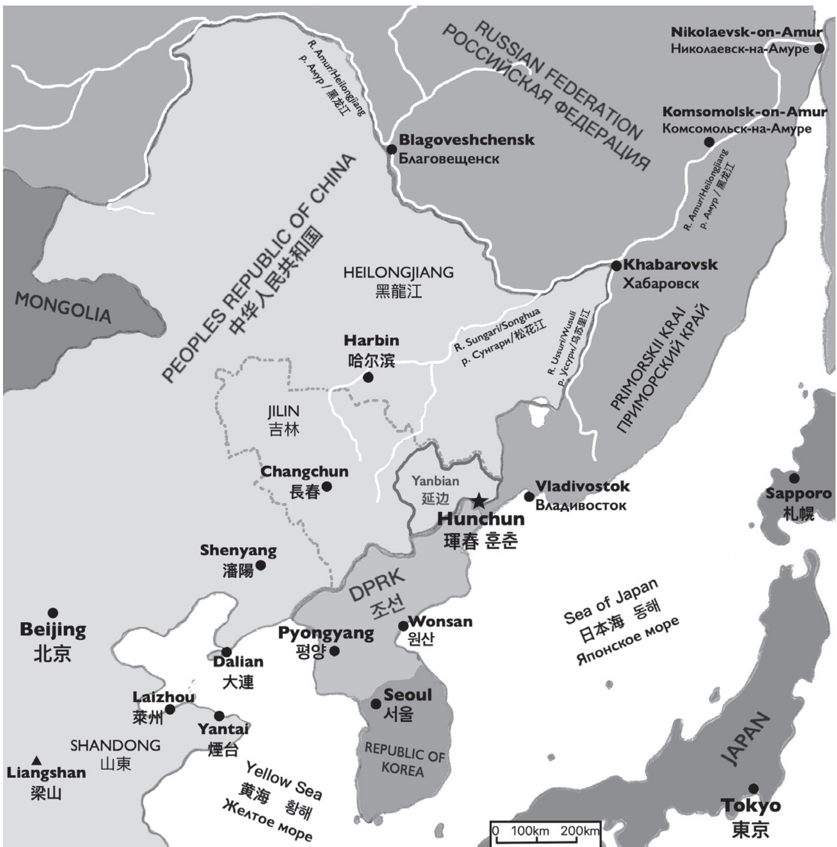

FIGURE I.2: Hunchun, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture and Jilin province in northeast Asia (map by author). Locations and distances are intended to be indicative rather than scientific.

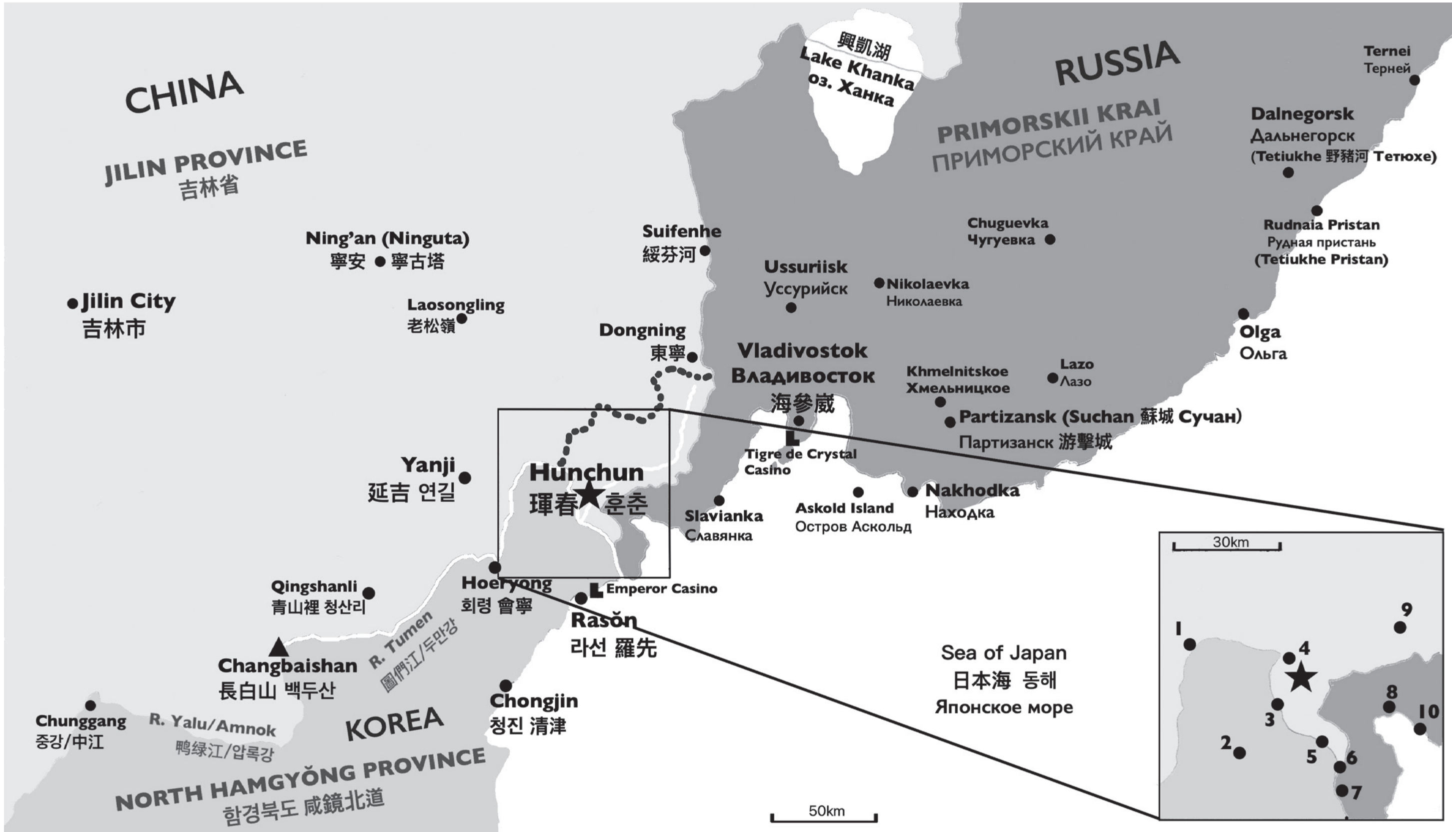

FIGURE I.3: The cross-border Hunchun area (map by author). Locations depicted have not necessarily existed at the same time. Dotted line corresponds to contemporary Hunchun municipality (*xianji shi*); white line to Hunchun's east is Hunchun River 琿春河 훈춘하. Inset: 1. Tumen 圖門; 2. Pongodong 봉오동 鳳梧洞; 3. Shatuozi 沙坨子; 4. Balian 八連; 5. Quanhe-Wŏnjŏng 圈河-원정 元汀; 6. Fangchuan 防川; 7. Zhanggufeng 張鼓峰/ Khasan Хасан; 8: Kraskino Краскино / Novokievsk Новокиевск; 9: Yangpao 杨泡; 10. Posyot Посьет / Maokouwai 毛口崴.

expansivist form, no grand vision of progress projected here in recent centuries has been a rarified product of Euro-Enlightenment. Secondly, engagements with these projects on the ground have always been diverse and mediated, lending local temporal frames vernacular and culturally embedded qualities. Indeed, key to this book's perspective—and inherent to its structure—is an awareness that suggesting that ideas of progress straightforwardly flowed out of Europe and, however (un)willingly, were adopted wholesale by colonized peoples is in itself to adopt a deterministic supposition of linear causality itself redolent of classical evolutionism. To examine more closely how visions of advancement through time relate to local ways of living, I now turn to a fuller description of Hunchun's pasts and presents.

Modernity at the Margins

The name Hunchun (Man. *Hunčun*; Kor. *Hunch'un*; Rus. *Khunchun*) has long been applied to both a settled center and a wider administrative area, and today refers to the town and its surrounding 5000 km^2 "county-level municipality" (*xianji shi*; fig. I.3). Hunchun is one of eight subunits comprising Yanbian and until the 1960s was larger than Yanji, now the main population center.[10] In addition to Tumen and Wangqing municipalities within Yanbian, Hunchun also borders China's Heilongjiang province to the north, the Russian Federation's Primorskii krai (also "Primorye") to the east, and North Korea's North Hamgyŏng province to the south. Climatically this is a place of seasonal extremes, with temperatures ranging from summer highs of 36°C to winter lows of –32°C.[11] Around the town are hills covered in thick mixed forest and the low-lying floodplains of the Tumen, Hunchun, and Buerhatong Rivers, which are used for agriculture. This landscape poses a forceful spectacle at any time of year, for while spring and summer push crystal rivers fizzing through rolling taiga as trees explode in greens of every shade, autumn curls deciduous leaves gleaming gold, a fanfare briefly blared before all is locked into monochrome blocks of wintry steel.

Whether from imperial or socialist metropoles, or the cosmopolitan vantage point of much Euro-American scholarship, this geopolitical and ecological setting may possess a frontier "edgeness" of a kind often favored by anthropologists and social historians. Such locales are sites for "decentering" or "dislocating" (Gladney 2004) grand imperious projects and for studying their attenuations or intensifications at the margins.[12] Yet it is less "decentering"—after

all an act which can be reproduced fractally more or less forever—that I seek here, than a recentering and relativization of modernity and progress in localized encounters among diverse people. Imperial formations are in any case distributed, uncertain entities, and linearity has not so much been imposed in "multiple" discrete forms or trickled down from more "advanced" locations, but has arisen here as a culturally textured and self-sustaining idea. My purpose in what follows is therefore not to locate some kind of "originary modern" (Stoler and McGranahan 2007: 30) but to explore the regimes of temporal difference that arise through vernacular engagements with the taxonomizing and dispossessing logics of progressivism. Key to how these have emerged, and thus analytically important beyond mere scene-setting, has been Hunchun's above-described ecology, a term I use to denote the natural world, which successive projects have sought to construct as external but which has remained stubbornly embedded in human affairs. But while my focus is firmly local, it is nevertheless important to appreciate that grand state-scale schemes have had a profound effect on who lives in Hunchun, where national and ethnic borders lie, and in shaping the broader time-space contexts from which local temporal configurations have emerged.

Colliding Imperial Histories

The proximity of the Sino-Russian border—8 km from central Hunchun—and the presence in town of both visitors and residents from across it, attest to Russia's status as the closest thing to a direct "European" influence on Hunchun in recent centuries. The first forebears of the Russian medical, shopping, and leisure tourists, language teachers, singers, dancers, and retirees who live or sojourn here today arrived in northeast Asia as the Romanov Empire (1613–1917) expanded eastward. From the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries, waves of mostly Slavic migration to northeast Asia served as distended conduits to Hunchun for the imperial ideas that percolated among Russia and its European competitors in Asia (Afinogenov 2020). This intensified from the 1850s as the Amur River region was construed as an El Dorado–like frontier for a modernizing Russia (Bassin 1999), becoming the site of civilizational *grands projets* such as the Trans-Siberian and China Eastern Railways. Yet despite the iron logic of railway imperialism, and the new techno-social rhythms it imposed on conquered territory, St. Petersburg's northeast Asian ventures continued to operate

through premodern practices and half-realized ambitions (Patrikeeff 2002), in part because settler-colonist populations remained small. Thus even as 1860 saw a swathe of coastal territory thitherto administered from Hunchun annexed to Russia (becoming the Primorye from which many of today's Russians come), and Russian troops occupied the town itself in 1900–1905, imperial expansion did not straightforwardly translate into imposition of Euro-origin linear time and borders.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Qing empire, which ceded the land to Hunchun's east, was, together with its neighbor Chosŏn Korea (1392–1897), confronted by crises of simultaneity brought on by imperial processes of which Tsarist expansion was only part. Both polities had experienced time-space crises before, as the Ming-Qing transition of the seventeenth century had seen years of violent disagreement over territorial control and new imperial calendars. Indeed, the Chosŏn Yi dynasty itself initially refused to accept Manchu-Qing temporal hegemony in the 1630s to 1640s (Struve 2005), part of a fractious internecine relationship rooted in the ecology of the Hunchun area: both Qing and Yi had political origins in this border region, and the nearby mountain known as Paektu in Korean and Golmin Šanggiyan Alin in Manchu (Changbai in Chinese) was revered as a site of provenance by both Manchus and Koreans. The Hunchun area has thus been a vital source rather merely a recipient of expansive imperial thinking, sustaining dynastic identity and sacred history both sides of the Tumen for peoples who understood their relations in eminently linear "ethnic" terms well before European encroachment (Crossley 1999).

Nevertheless, this prior experience ill prepared either Qing or Chosŏn for the expansive vectors of European colonial commerce, violence, settlement, and thinking which conveyed the unforgiving reason of high imperial modernity to East Asia. A conspiracy of these forces and the reforms and revolutions which responded to them brought a juddering end to dynastic history across the Tumen as successor states abandoned understandings of cyclical time and fuzzy frontiers (Murthy and Schneider 2013). Simultaneous with Russia's eastward march, territorial and temporal linearity arrived most forcefully in East Asia at the hands of maritime British, French, and later Japanese empires and the "time thrift" of their mechanical clocks, trains, and routinized industrial labor (Thompson 1967: 83). Yet Hunchun lay far to the north of China and Korea's decisive littoral encounters, or the cosmopolitan birthplaces of reformist ideas that

arose around imperial collapse. The epistemic shifts of China's Hundred Days' Reform (1898) and May Fourth Movement (1919), or Korea's Gwangmu Reforms (1880s to 1900s), thus arrived here in at-best aggregated form. Rationalizing projects during the Republic of China (1912–1949) period became tangled up in the area's dense ecology and were swamped by the demographic consequences of empire's end: from the 1870s to the 1910s, hundreds of thousands of Korean and Chinese peasants fled to the Hunchun area—including now-Russian-controlled territory—from famines in Hamgyŏng and Shandong provinces, giving early experiences of East Asia's post-dynastic age a demotic rather than intellectual character here. These settlers and their descendants, together with Russian migrants arriving in Primorye at the same time, would later play a vanguard role in processes that brought Chinese, Korean, and Soviet revolutionary modernity to Hunchun. But much of this occurred in response to another external power which from the 1910s attempted to project its own progressive visions.

Japan's northeast Asian empire was—along with state socialism—among the twentieth century's most intensive efforts to make "modern" civilization a lived reality. Tokyo's expansive designs were felt early in Hunchun, which lay just across the Tumen from Japan-occupied Korea (1905–1945), and imperial forces also briefly controlled a Hunchun-adjacent segment of eastern Russia (1920–22). But the empire's apotheosis came with the creation of the Manchukuo state (1932–1945) in whose southeastern corner Hunchun lay. Centered on the "ultra-modernist" city of Shinkyō (Denison and Ren 2016), today's Changchun, which as Jilin provincial capital lies 420 km northwest of Hunchun, Manchukuo was run by developmentalist intellectuals who made the state a showcase for techno-rationalist improvement. Planned cities were linked by the world's fastest trains, while advanced industries sprouted up to exploit the region's prodigious resources. Economic growth in turn encouraged hundreds of thousands more Han (especially from Shandong, like the plumber's grandparents) and Korean (including madamae's parents from Kyŏngsang in present-day South Korea) settlers to the Hunchun area and further north. Millions of colonists from Japan proper also arrived across the region, including in countryside around Hunchun. Although lasting only thirteen years, and ending in the hurried 1945 withdrawal of almost all Japanese settlers, this totalizing project to map industrial progressivism onto the imagined history-free tabula rasa of the old Manchu homeland deeply shaped meanings of modernity across East Asia for decades

to come. Yet demotic experiences of frontier colonization, nascent nationalisms and class, and ethnic oppression ensured that for Hunchun's multiethnic population, the time of Japanese empire often lacked convincing historical direction. As the high modernist endeavor sought to tamp down uncertainty, border areas like Hunchun saw governmental incoherence from Tokyo, Seoul, and Shinkyō, and while Japan's entry into the "modern" world rested on an intellectual self-estrangement from historical East Asia (Tanaka 1993), the Manchukuo state still sought the "authenticity" (Duara 2003) of Manchu-Chinese reign names, imperial rites, and other classical paraphernalia. Japan and Russia were both latecomers to high modernity, but the fact that the former adopted European-style imperialism alongside modernism appeared to intensify its quest for both. The latter, by contrast, had already witnessed imperial collapse and the onset of a new progressivism by the time Manchukuo was founded.

Socialist Progress

The Soviet Union's (1922–1991) northeast Asian connections were crucial from the start, since the new state was only founded once the Bolsheviks had fought their way from St. Petersburg to the Pacific coast, five years after the 1917 October Revolution. The last days of the Russian Civil War in the east sent Tsarist "White" refugees spilling over borders into Manchuria[13] and Korea, with Hunchun serving as first refuge for many. With these time-rebel adherents of the *ancien régime* expelled, much as Ming remnants were earlier put down by the Qing, the Soviet project to implement post-Enlightenment rationalism began. Leninist and Stalinist digestions of the thought of Marx, who never imagined Russia as primed for the future-ward leap toward communism, made Soviet progress a categorical statist enterprise. From the 1920s to the 1930s and the articulation of Socialism in One Country, Soviet rule forged a linear order based on state penetration of social life, breakneck and neck-breaking industrialization, and rigid boundaries around the polity, its constituent territories, and domestic ethnic groups. While just as concerned with the conquest of time (Buck-Morss 2002; Ssorin-Chaikov 2017) as of space, the USSR expanded to fill all the lands of the old Russian Empire, though its progressive response to imposed imperial teleologies was selective: although in the 1950s Moscow renounced claims to the Tsarist-built China Eastern Railway, no suggestion was made of returning 1860-annexed territory to Hunchun's east.

Testament to the USSR's status as a new model for "catching up" with Euro-American imperia, and to the counterintuitive "untidy connections" typical among imperial formations (Stoler and McGranahan 2007: 4–5), Moscow's influence in East Asia transcended ideology: even Manchukuo's mercantile authorities adopted Five-Year Plans. But the Soviet project was more often a vanguardist beacon for those resisting Japanese empire, and as elsewhere in the world, Moscow's promises of progressive autonomy inspired Chinese and Korean socialists fighting for time sovereignty in Manchuria. Around Hunchun during a thirty-year period from the Russian Civil War to the Korean War (1950–53), Russian, Korean, and Chinese partisans waged entangled campaigns in the hills and valleys once central to Qing cosmology. Writing of indigenous assertions of sovereignty amid the wildly asymmetrical power relations of North American settler colonialism, Audra Simpson (2014) shows how the cross-border Mohawk Nation engages in a "politics of refusal" against the imposed temporality of settlement, border demarcation, and "ethnic" recognition. Around Hunchun where massive migratory waves had earlier dispossessed indigenous Tungusic groups once drafted into Qing banner armies, a comparable time struggle played out *among* settler colonists. The fruits of these campaigns would be the establishment of PRC, Soviet, and DPRK control in sectors of territory around Hunchun, local experiences that reveal more about how new Histories and Sino-Soviet, Sino-Korean, and Soviet-Korean borders gained meaning than rarified diplomatic affairs can (Goncharov et al. 1993; Shen 2012).

Considerably later than maritime colonialism brought Westphalian statehood and linear history to East Asia then, it was only from the 1950s that the three polities surrounding Hunchun recognizably displayed what Saurabh Dube (2004: 19) calls the "incestuous couplings of nation and history under regimes of modernity." Complicating this newfound progressive selfhood, material remnants of Japanese empire kick-started socialist industrialization in post-1949 northeast China and postwar North Korea. But whatever their tangled inheritances, political projects in each of the PRC, USSR, and DPRK were now officially on cognate temporal trajectories toward communism, with each state enjoying a formally commensurate place as a discrete entity within the socialist "camp." Statist strictures meant ordinary cross-border populations met only in highly choreographed contexts, and in any case happy temporal coexistence lasted only until the 1960s when Chinese, Soviet, and Korean socialisms historically

diverged. Such were the rifts running along borders around Hunchun during the Sino-Soviet Split that, amid Chinese attacks on Soviet and Korean "revisionism," madamae witnessed public executions of attempted USSR- or DPRK-bound escapees. Defectors' relatives were removed from "confidential" (*baomi*) jobs at the Telegraph Office where madamae worked. Albeit governed by non-capitalist logics, Mao-era employment had its own precarities after all.

Postsocialist Asynchrony

With the end of China's catch-up-at-all-costs Mao era, the rift with the USSR was patched over during the 1980s, but soon after that high socialist forwardism faltered on all sides of Hunchun's borders. Soviet stagnation (*zastoi*) under Leonid Brezhnev (r. 1964–82) was followed by collapse, sparking deprivation in Russia and a catastrophic famine in North Korea, which drove new waves of Koreans to Hunchun's rural surrounds from the 1990s to the 2000s. One female refugee from the DPRK married a relative of madamae's in Hongxing, a nearby village. New Chinese approaches to economy and territory under Deng Xiaoping (r. 1978–1989) also coincided with Russian loosenings to allow for the reopening of borders sealed since the 1950s. From the early 1990s, Hunchun's earliest Russian shoppers arrived seeking basic goods that were lacking in eastern Russia following economic collapse. Yet they arrived in a northeast China whose inheritance of state-run heavy industry has made market adaptation harder than elsewhere in the country, leading to mass layoffs. In response, and reversing the migrations of earlier generations, hundreds of thousands of northeastern Han have "returned" to wealthier parts of inner China since the 1990s, while many of the Chosŏnjok with whom madamae grew up have migrated to booming South Korea.

Emerging since the diverse ends of Maoist, Soviet, and Kimist eras, therefore, has been a patchwork of staggered postsocialisms around Hunchun. China, Russia, and North Korea are today more out of step than under high socialism's enforced synchrony or, before that, the pooled Sino-Korean subjectivity of imperial Confucianism. These asynchronies are reflected in today's encounters among ordinary citizens in Hunchun, poignant both because cross-border populations were out-of-contact until relatively recently (as they were again during the 2020–23 COVID-19 pandemic), and given the tangled grand enterprises that have shaped local temporalities and identities over the past 150 years. Vernacular

encounters in today's town have some of the unruliness of pre-twentieth-century periods of frontier migration, yet these nevertheless occur across borders whose linear rigidity is a product of layered modernisms.

Life in Hunchun today reveals the town as a nexus for cosmopolitan contact among people and peoples with varied senses of movement through time, and of the histories that got them here. This is a quintessential site of the "disjointed" and multidirectional contact which, foreseen by Arjun Appadurai (1990) at the Cold War's end, pervades a culturally and economically liberalizing Asia. As a contemporary hub for China's global "rise" and a bright spot on a background of regional decline, Hunchun now has a 2015-opened high-speed railway to Beijing built by a Shandong company, sophisticated logistics facilities, and a border trade zone, all signs of a rapid departure from curated socialist internationalism to looser neoliberal transnationalism. Even dry-cleaning shops have names like "international laundry," contributing to a confounding streetscape of South Korean–style numbered apartment buildings, traditional Chinese gardens, a mock-tsarist Post Office, and jumbled signage in Chinese characters, Korean Chosŏn'gŭl, Russian Cyrillic, and, sometimes, Latin script English too (fig. I.4). Alongside Chosŏnjok, Han, and Manchu "old Hunchun people," Han laborers from northeast Chinese rustbelt towns here encounter Russians from dilapidated Far Eastern settlements, and North Korean intermediaries seeking business opportunities. While small-scale traders gravitate to Hunchun for commercial opportunity, wealthier Russians and Han come to consume Chosŏnjok-mediated South Korean cool, from chic coffee shops to rice burger restaurants and cozy bars. If these attractions are cyphers of "Euro-American" (post)modernity, then as much as can be said is that they rode settler colonial vectors moving from the supposed origin continent to the United States, thence to postwar South Korea and in turn to post–Cold War Yanbian. Russians from dystopian post-Soviet settlements, who describe themselves as "Europeans" in contrast to their Chinese or Korean neighbors, encounter lifts and lattes, automatic doors, electric vehicles and high-speed trains for the first time in Hunchun, and feel little authorial attachment to these trophies of technological and aesthetic progress, which small-town Primorye lacks. As Russians whose ancestors once migrated east from Europe meet cultural currents that came the other way around the world, we might ask, On whose timescale, if anyone's, do Hunchun people now live? Is there value in even asking this question?

FIGURE I.4: Hunchun streetscape and multilingual shop signage (photos by author, February–May 2015).

Modernities Multiple?

My answer to the second question above is no, but if we do for a moment imagine that there is merit in determining "whose" time Hunchun people now live in, this would require meaningfully separating the above-described instantiations of modernity that have converged here. Yet as a welter of recent scholarship has

shown, Russian, Qing, Chosŏn, Japanese, Soviet, Chinese, and Korean temporalizing schemes have been inextricably connected even as intellectual endeavors, never mind as messy lived experiences. This goes beyond early Romanov-European entanglements or Manchukuo's Five-Year Plans: Russia's late-imperial and early-revolutionary projects informed how thinkers in metropolitan Japan (Konishi 2013; Linkhoeva 2020), revolutionary China (E. McGuire 2017), and colonized Korea (Cho 2016) devised new social categories, political technologies, and military strategies; Japanese imperial hypermodernity engendered a forceful emulatory response from Chinese (Tang 2000) and Korean (Eckert 2016) modernizers who reconstructed national pasts as foundations for their own politics of refusal; Soviet, Chinese, and Korean Stalinist-socialist modernisms were in relations of constant mutual influence and counterreaction (Kaple 1994; Lankov 2007), for while the USSR projected a new progressivist morality for a time, the demise of Sino-Soviet Friendship in turn triggered ideological adaptation and Promethean construction of defensive infrastructure in both China and the USSR (Pulford 2019: 46–47); most recently, post-Mao China and post-Soviet Russia have examined one another (Weber 2021; Li Si 2012)—and Japanese and Korean capitalist exemplars—in search of developmentalist models and "national ideas" beyond the teleologies of socialist utopia (Chadaev 2006; Deng 2018).

As Sho Konishi notes in a critique of what he calls "influence studies" that posit "the West" as the wellspring of East Asian modernity, these entanglements show that we do better to attend to the "multidirectional nature of transnational intellectual phenomena" than to seek origins (Konishi 2013: 13–18). Konishi's focus on the multi-nodal "rhizomes" through which ideas move takes us beyond seeing modernity as "multiple" (Eisenstadt 2002) or easily distilled into a story of European or any other influence, and while he and other authors cited above show how these networks operate among intellectual elites, such nonlinear dynamics are still more significant in a localized everyday setting like Hunchun. Here, moreover, with the lens of critique and comparison expanded to include historical collapse as well as construction, and colonial settlers as well as imperial architects, it is the interlacing of different organizational and temporalizing projects that—even in the face of each scheme's claims to exceptionalism—lends them meaning in daily life. Without ignoring the hegemonic power dynamics through which modernizing ideas have traveled, or the very real boundaries of separation that territorial modernity has put between people, this book shows

that in settings like Hunchun seemingly distinct progressive visions are not easily categorizable at the vernacular scale. The timescale on which Hunchun people live has primarily been their own, even if different groups or individuals have been differently oriented within it. Closer framing of my fieldwork-derived approach offers further insight into this.

Layers and Inheritances

Madamae and the plumber above showed that, however polysemous any one person's temporal orientation at a given moment, diverse visions of progress matter in intercultural encounters. Key to this book's wider argument that temporality has a pivotal place in relations across difference is its focus on Hunchun as a single site. As historian Nianshen Song (2018: 10) remarks, the Tumen River area, at whose heart the town lies, has long been "an integrated socioecological unit," even as the above-described Manchu, Chinese, Korean, Russian, and Japanese imperial cavalcade has wrought significant local changes, from shifts in the territory administered from Hunchun garrison or county-town, to local demographic transformations, and variations in the location and permeability of Sino-Russian and Sino-Korean boundaries (see also A. Park 2019). Hunchun was almost exclusively Manchu from its founding until the late-nineteenth-century Korean and Han influxes, which saw the population increase sevenfold between 1886 and 1935.[14] Thousands more Han arrived under 1950s to 1960s Maoist campaigns, and post-1990s Chosŏnjok outfluxes and Han influxes have transformed the place again. In adjacent southern Primorye, late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century arrivals of Tsarist imperial subjects along with Koreans and Chinese dispossessed a sparse indigenous population; then, in the 1930s, Soviet Koreans (known as Koryŏ saram) were deported to Central Asia under Stalin amid a racializing Japanese spy panic. Russian and Ukrainian settlement increased throughout the mid-to-late Soviet period, yet since the 1990s this has reversed as hundreds of thousands—like their Han neighbors moving south—seek better economic conditions in western Russia. Decades after the Koryŏ saram deportation, some have recently undertaken their own delayed returns from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, or Tajikistan to southern Primorye. In North Korea, the area that is today North Hamgyŏng province was, like northeastern China and eastern Russia, a remote site of exile under the Chosŏn. The region's harshness also explains the mass outmigrations of future-Chosŏnjok

and Koryŏ saram around the turn of the twentieth century, and famine refugees at the turn of the twenty-first. Today the town of Rasŏn neighboring Hunchun is home to notable Chinese and Russian business communities.

Diffusely distributed heterogeneity thus characterizes the cross-border space around Hunchun. The municipality itself, with its countryside of mixed Han, Chosŏnjok, and Manchu villages, shows that this multidimensional migratory history has resulted in ethnic, national, and linguistic identifications not mapping onto each other directly. Where language is concerned, while Han speak northeastern Mandarin, Russians speak Russian (which varies little dialectically), and Chosŏnjok speak Yanbian-dialect Korean (Chosŏnmal, close to the Hamgyŏng Korean over the border, but now with South Koreanized pronunciation and anglo-neologisms), there are many overlaps. Manchus speak Chinese and no Manchu, a few old-timer Hunchun Han speak Korean, Chosŏnjok under fifty speak native-level Chinese, some Han, Chosŏnjok, and Manchus—especially cross-border traders—speak Russian, and some Russians, particularly younger people settled in Hunchun, speak Chinese. Like tokenistic use of non-Chinese languages in other PRC borderlands, ubiquitous Korean signage even on Han-run shops is often error-strewn, although reflecting the Chosŏnjok's unique "model minority" position (Pulford 2021b), such issues are critically covered in local media—unthinkable in Tibet or Xinjiang.[15] At least for now then, the CCP's social megaproject to make citizenship, ethnicity, language, territory, and other traits map neatly one-on-one-on-one remains incomplete in Yanbian.

Sociologist Ulrich Beck (2004) labeled the commingling of diverse people out of necessity rather than commitment to multiculturalism a form of "forced" cosmopolitanism. This applies well here, for Hunchun's heterogeneity results less from the kind of recent intercontinental gathering of mobile citizens often associated with the "cosmopolitan" idea than from an older, highly localized convergence of sociocultural worlds and mostly subaltern settlers. We might therefore also think of it as a form—against the Stalinist slur of bourgeois "rootlessness"—of "rooted" cosmopolitanism. Of course, such organic diversity is, as philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah (2010: 215) notes in his own global-citizenship-based discussion of rootedness, a more normal situation in human history than exclusivist national communities. But given the forceful nation- and progress-forging projects that have unfolded here, it is analytically important to foreground the social, political, and economic connectedness of multiethnic lives around

Hunchun over time. For this book's diverse anthropological and historical interlocutors, shared experiences across an area that today falls within three states, and social life's rootedness in specific ecologies, have been as important as any externally imposed boundaries or categories.

My interest in the long-standing oneness of this area means that, as in Simpson's abovementioned work,[16] unity of place is analytically pivotal in spite of territorial constraints imposed by rationalizing states (and foregrounded in much "border studies" literature). Rooted research into Hunchun people's temporalized encounters, both with cultural others and with layered local pasts, shows how everyday tangles among progressivist visions already intertwined at the intellectual level have embedded progress as a component of identity. Produced by both the ecology of the Hunchun space and each project's negotiations with the smuggled freight of previous ones, these on-the-ground entanglements mean that at no stage has any progressivist vision in Hunchun been a clean break, refining the model and shaving back its inconsistencies. But it is precisely this that makes each iteration of progress so compelling.

Ecological Civilization

Local engagements with progressive enterprises have all unfolded in the theater of river valleys, wooded hillsides, and floodplains which extends across the west-east space from Changbaishan to the Sea of Japan. This landscape, today prized as a tourist attraction and source of wild produce, has played a powerful material role in historical and political identity formation. After the fall of a Manchu-Qing imperium buttressed by visions of local ethnic origins, frontier banditry lodged in local taiga later transmuted into the ethic of guerrilla fighters who ushered in mid-twentieth-century PRC, USSR, and DPRK socialist statehood. The rational temporal synchrony touted by Beijing, Moscow, and Pyongyang under high socialism thus rested on an unruly demotic inheritance not necessarily compatible with state aims, something also true of interstate "Friendship"—another focus of this book. Today, visions of slick China-led development are borne along high-speed railways whose tunnels and bridges pierce through an imagined "wilderness," but in practice are often bluntly enacted by rugged masculinized frontiersmen.

Exploring the ecological limits to positivist notions of unimpeded progress reveals why progress has become so tenacious a relational human concern

here. Modernizing projects' struggles to "develop" this area have been paralleled by similarly partial successes in transforming local subjectivity. Certain types of terrestrially rooted subject have endured in Hunchun despite cataclysmic sociopolitical change, and indeed have become central to the staging of successive top-down initiatives: be they Qing banner soldiers, frontier bandits, socialist partisans, or cross-border shuttle-traders, earthy male archetypes have been recurrent protagonists in historical and temporal dramas. However recalcitrant such figures have seemed to patrician outsiders, it is their activities that have lent enduring local plausibility to otherwise abstract visions of progress.

To revisit an above point, Anna Tsing notes in a book with a more subterranean focus than this one that ecology also helps demonstrate the impossibility of disentangling different vectors of global progress. Against historians' careful categorizations of the modernities of, for example, Japan's Meiji Restoration and Mao's Great Leap Forward, Tsing (2005: 190) observes that "from the perspective of a tree, there may not have been much difference." Local subjectivities in Hunchun further confirm that the on-the-ground effects of nationhood and progress are no better studied through modernist taxonomies than they are through searches for origins or influence.

Multiple Ends of History

In this terrain, each successive progressivist project's encounters with remnants of previous ones have also shaped efforts to draw Hunchun into a smooth order. Accreted "ruins" (Stoler 2008) of imperial and (post)socialist enterprises lie scattered around today's Hunchun, and have been treated with a linearity-defying mix of acceptance and abandonment by those coming later. Like the defunct infrastructure that memorializes socialism's collapses elsewhere (Ssorin-Chaikov 2016), rusting state-run coal and forestry concerns limp on in Hunchun's outskirts despite economic deprioritization under post-1980s marketization. Their survival demonstrates that shifting from one mode of economic organization to another does not always entail ruination, as remains of what came before may be adapted or maintained: indeed, northeast China's industrial base, which in the 1950s proved a springboard for Soviet-assisted PRC productive expansion (Hirata 2021), had 1930s Japanese imperial origins. As Judd Kinzley (2018: 2–3) shows in work on successive Russian, Chinese Nationalist, and Communist resource

exploitation in Xinjiang, repurposed state projects enacted in a single place can attain a "layered" coherence even between ideologically divergent regimes. But abandonment of the old is the more usual story. Resistance to reform among those same northeastern industries today—more massive versions of Hunchun's rusting industries—shows how contemporary developmentalism often trips on the remains of past progress.

Further material layers of Hunchun's bygone progressivisms include the 1960s single-story brick homes of madamae's self-defined "real communist" youth, lurking between the taller buildings of the town's recent boom. These houses were at least once inhabited, but also dotting the urban landscape are ruins of luxury villas half-built during the 1990s but never completed (see Chapter 1). Neglected remains of several late-Qing-era constructions, including a central customs house and two earthwork forts built (in vain) to defend the Russian and Korean borders on the town's rural outskirts (Chapter 5), are the oldest ruins to bygone expansivisms.

These layered remains invite us to consider how progressive temporal imaginings have, paradoxically, been shaped as much by the cataclysmic ends to which they have come as by the forwardist visions they have projected. As noted, the demise of Chinese, Soviet, and Korean high socialisms were only the latest "ends of history" here. Made famous by Francis Fukuyama (1992) in an—often misinterpreted—account of the apparent 1980s to 1990s triumph of Western liberal democracy, this term also describes the experiences of socialist citizens moving from Marxist utopianism to nonlinear "second-hand time" (Aleksievich 2013), and indeed earlier imperial collapses in all three states around Hunchun. As elsewhere, world-changing moments in China, Russia, and Korea are usually framed by the alluring temporal conceit of "revolutions," and it is true that such events—seen in Julian calendrical time to have occurred in China in 1911, 1949, 1966–76, 1978; in Russia in 1905, 1917, 1989–1992; and in Korea in 1919 and 1948—all informed Hunchun people's understandings of their own and others' temporal and spatial orientations. But foregrounding "revolution" per se implies a forwardist view of the relationship between a prerevolutionary past, revolutionary events, and what came afterward, and risks blurring the lines between idealized causes and inchoate or mediated experiences of them. Since expansivist projects rest on constant deferral and incompleteness (Stoler and McGranahan 2007: 8), therefore, ends of history offer a clearer frame than revolutions for studying

progress here, accommodating both linear idealism and the separations and discontinuities that texture multiethnic everyday experience. While taking seriously the forceful mass promulgation of revolutionary impulses to rationalize messy human relationality (Scott 1998), studying multiple ends in one site reveals more vividly their vernacular results, not merely the visions that animated them. The fact that change is produced as much by collapse as by inception is reflected in the book's below-described structure.

Territorializing Time

Explaining continuities, including the endurance of forward-looking temporality, through ecology and ends of history offers a new account of the time-space of modernity in a frontier setting. For my purposes the term *frontier* has a sweeping relevance to the Hunchun area across time, although modulated depending on the period from the classical "margin of expansion" and settlement from imperial centers (Lattimore 1947) to recent "resource frontiers" (Cons and Eilenberg 2019). All these frontiers share the quality of being deliberately made through projection of "civilizational" or dispossessive schemes, rather than existing as a "natural" space. If, as noted, northeast Asian experiences of modern time since the mid-nineteenth century have been collisions with newly simultaneous events from different realms, then this book is a grounded counterpoint to studies that explore the never-straightforward ways that such "violently imposed connectedness" (Karl 2020: 2) came about across frontiers. As Xiaobing Tang (1996) observes in a study of Chinese nationalist thinker Liang Qichao, the adoption of "modern" temporality and spatiality in China was fraught with paradoxes. On one hand, the encompassment of the whole world within a single time frame, which European colonialism demanded, entailed a "despatialization of history" since every people and place was now to be located in the same history. But arriving alongside linear time were nascent ideas of nationhood, which, being concerned with territory, also had a powerful spatiality: "nationalism is essentially a discourse organized by a territorial imagination, and yet, for its own political legitimacy, it needs to subscribe to a universal timetable of evolution and change," notes Tang. Channeling his historical interlocutor, Tang shows how Liang navigated tensions between universalist progress and particularist nationhood, eventually "respatializing" modernity by imagining dynamic encounters among "separate but interacting cultural systems" within a single "anthropological space" (7–8).

Yet in a setting like Hunchun, such cultural separateness does not really hold up. Thus while Tang further confirms the already textured quality of grand historical visions, I suggest that to understand local experience of progress we need to take a different—inverted—approach to the territorialization of time. Studies of global intellectual encounters like Tang's assume modernity to be the primary, direct force traveling through chains of accelerating transnational conductivity, introducing framings of state, nation, and time, which are then "filled with a Chinese referent" (Anagnost 1997: 8–11). But Hunchun reveals instead that what is direct, immediate, and stark is localized intercultural and human-ecology contact, while it is modernity that is distended and diluted, freighted with the detritus of previous defunct modernisms and human relationships. The resulting layerings and tangles are precisely what have embedded modernist projects within human life as lived here in relation to other people and local terrain. When new ideas arrive, minds are as often trained on the recent past as on future promises, and so innovations are channeled through existing social and material understandings. Hunchun has endured as a subjective community brought into being by co-experience of pivotal "events" (Humphrey 2008), and continuity and rupture (Holbraad et al. 2019) have interlaced to give progressive temporality its textured, humane, and, crucially, lasting qualities.

These observations have implications for a wider sweep of human experience. The primacy in Hunchun of ungovernable terrain, complex inheritances, and unruly human subjectivities, sympathies, and sociality shares much with what Saurabh Dube (2004) calls "mythic pasts" within South Asian experiences of colonial and postcolonial modernity. As Dube shows, rationalist and homogenizing visions projected by British rule in India became tangled up in heterogenous demotic affairs, with Christian conversion spawning vernacular Christianities and a new legal-political system interpreted through local customary practices. Expanding Dube's vision for a "history without warranty" free of presuppositions about causality or sequence, and beyond related projects to "rescue history from the nation" (Duara 1996), my perspective here not only examines the polyvalent dispositions that underlie "fetishized" ideas such as nationhood (Dube 2004: 20) but shows that understandings of modernity itself should also take nothing for granted. While recent scholarship on postsocialist Asia has deployed "re-enchantment" as a descriptor for social change after the end of austerely "disenchanted" bureaucratic socialism (M. Yang 2020; Taylor 2015),

progress's tenacity in Hunchun over a longer timespan shows that enchantment never really went away. We were, in Bruno Latour's (2006) terms, "never modern." The mythic underpinnings of modernity may be self-destructive at the intellectual scale, since as Adorno and Horkheimer (1997: 11–12) argue, enlightenment eventually becomes exactly the kind of established fairy tale it needs to consume: "Just as the myths already realize enlightenment, so enlightenment with every step becomes more engulfed in mythology. It receives all its matter from the myths, in order to destroy them." But in the everyday it is precisely enchanted "matter" that animates progress as a plausible temporal frame despite serial experiences of terminal collapse. What Timothy Mitchell (1999) calls the modern "state effect" of a state/society separation is blurred, although not so much because top-down statism diffuses into everyday life but because the state had diffusion at its core all along.

Modernizing projects retain their capacity to homogenize and destroy, as much on today's neoliberal "frontiers of capitalism" (Tsing 2003) as in global settings where peoples and ecologies constructed as wild and empty have confronted "civilizing" impositions of "settler time" (Rifkin 2017). Writing of Native North American experiences of dispossession, Mark Rifkin shows how centuries of denied sovereignty have not only deprived indigenous people of their land but have also forced them to live either in some kind of primitivized past or, equally violently, a searingly shared "now" whose temporal parameters, rhythms, periodizations, and histories are defined by ongoing "settler-driven change" (2017: 7). But Native temporal orientations are not "reducible" to the universalizing "temporality of exception" (x) imposed by settler dispossession, and against unspoken assumptions that we all know what modernity is, Rifkin's is an appeal for recognition of Native temporal difference rooted in granular everyday experience. Most of the present book's past and present interlocutors fall into the settler rather than the Native category if we map terms from the US context onto northeast Asia, and my study of "processes of culture and control . . . checkered and contested histories of meaning and mastery" (Dube 2004: 8) focuses less on temporalities rooted in the reproductive life cycle than Rifkin's does. But for this project, which pushes against high modernity's thirst for the "annihilation of space through time" (Harvey 1990: 273) by attending to the spatiality of territory, terrain, flora, fauna, and physical proximity among social groups, the notion of time sovereignty and its entanglement with land claims (vital around borders)

is productive. To return to questions of coevalness, framing time and politics in this way reveals how people become what Rifkin (2017: 5) calls "temporally intelligible" to one another, and allows me to seek ethnographic answers to a question that inverts the terms of Fabian's (1983) injunction: If people are accustomed to seeing interlocutors far away in space as also temporally distant, then what are the consequences of people encountering one another at close physical proximity but across divides of temporal experience? In what remains of this introduction I describe further the research through which I investigated this and other questions, and outline the book's structure.

Fieldwork

Whatever my territorial and material concerns, this remains a committedly humanistic project researched through extensive daily immersion with Hunchun people during regular fieldwork since 2013 (the longest stint being sixteen months in 2014–15). Beyond the front archway of madamae's apartment building, time spent working, studying, and relaxing with Han, Russian, Korean, and Manchu friends, acquaintances, and classmates has offered the clearest window into present and past progress, and its place in relations across difference. I learned much about Hunchun's geography tramping the streets with Alesha, among my closest local friends, who, like most Russians here, was from just over the border. On hometown visits, which showed me how Hunchun's recent buoyancy has coincided with southern Primorye's slump into post-Soviet regression (fig. I.5), Alesha and his fiancée, Vika, would tease me about fieldwork being a cover for "spying," parodying real fears that have long haunted Sino-Russo-Korean borders. Shared appreciation for sarcastic humor was one among many common dispositions that suggested northern European cultural affinity between people from Nottingham (me) and Kraskino, notwithstanding geopolitical and historical rifts. Indeed, understandably given Hunchun's demographics, I was usually assumed to be Russian myself by locals unless I mentioned otherwise, an imposed positionality that placed my interactions firmly amid the intercultural encounters I was researching but also had a bearing on my relationships, to which I had to remain attuned.

"You should tell them you're British right away," I was instructed by Vova, a Koryŏ saram friend in his late twenties who, born in Uzbekistan, raised in

FIGURE I.5: Kraskino's slump (photos by author, November 2015). Compare the atmosphere and aesthetics in fig. I.4, less than 40 km away.

Russia, and educated in Harbin and Seoul, effortlessly traversed Hunchun's nexus of worlds. Chinese people do not like or respect Russians, he said: years of fractious interactions since the 1990s border opening had soured relations. Vova's frankness was striking given his role as Hunchun's main Russian community organizer and—proven by the portrait of President Vladimir Putin leering from his mobile phone lock screen—self-identification as a staunch Russian patriot. Assisting him in the former role, I helped arrange formal "Friendship" events, cultural performances, dinners, or sporting contests for local Russian, Chinese, and Korean people. As we organized logistics, Vova would regale me with tales of his Russian military service, explain why Stalin's deportation of the Koryŏ saram was necessary, embark on conspiratorial disquisitions about Sino-Russian Friendship or Russia's wars in Ukraine and Syria, and rail against American and Chinese exploitation of Russia. The Russian *narod* (people) were natural victims, he opined, because many misinterpreted their simple sincerity as a sign of uncivilization (*nekulturnost'*) or backwardness (*otstalost'*). Progress-rooted frames thus again offered a means to measure cross-border relations. Indeed, since friendship for me was both methodology and subject matter (cf. Byler 2022:

133), it was through such conversations that I came to see how my anthropological work resembled the cross-cultural analysis to which different groups in Hunchun were already subjecting one another.

From the Chinese side, Friendship events were overseen by Han or Chosŏnjok employees of the Hunchun government's foreign affairs department. During dinners or sports matches, department head Director Hong would assure me and other "Russians" that we would be comfortable here, since Hunchun was a place tolerant (Ch. *baorong*, Kor. *yongnap*) of intercultural difference. Speaking effusively of his love for Russia, he would toast the foreign guests' role in Hunchun's international future. Yet curiously, attendees were often unable to appreciate these friendly overtures: Hong spoke no Russian and the older Russians around him little Chinese. During encounters between people from towns less than 100 km apart, therefore, a researcher from over 8000 km away was asked to translate.

The main job of Hong's department was settling disputes between Russian customers and local Chinese-run businesses. As I befriended some of the owners of these shops, which sold everything from electronics to home décor and car parts, I spent time helping out instore or accompanying them on rare days off to eat barbecued lamb skewers in nearby woods, attesting to the existence of a cross-border *shashlik* ecumene extending into Russia. In both informal chats and structured interviews, local Han generally shared the plumber's self-identification as Shandong people (map fig. I.2), even if they had never visited their historical *laojia* (native village). Many said that the culture of ancestors who participated in 1880s to 1930s Manchurian migrations known as "bursting east of the pass" (*chuangguandong*)—in reference to the Shanhai Pass separating China proper from the frontier—continued to influence their spoken expressions and favorite foods. Hunchun's clean air and countryside were still contrasted favorably to inner China's crowded and polluted cities, however. Thus while Han people such as Director Hong sometimes presided as "hosts" to Hunchun's fully foreign outsiders, most still recognized diverse and distant origins.

Deeper histories were close to the surface in other interactions too. Rural Primorye residents still speak the Ukrainian-inflected Russian of their parents or grandparents, and aside from his Friendship duties Vova headed the China branch of the Russian *Kazachestvo* network for overseas "Cossacks" and their descendants. These key figures in seventeenth- through nineteenth-century Sino-Russo-Korean encounters confronted the Manchu-Qing banner soldiers of

the Hunchun garrison in imperial days, and older local Manchus recall a sense of separateness as rulers of the realm enduring within living memory: during my explorations of the wider municipality, inhabitants of official "Manchu villages" remembered parental prohibitions against marrying non-Manchus, and customs such as not eating dog, which set them apart from Han and Korean neighbors. Manchu identity became stigmatized during the twentieth century, and little Manchu has been spoken for three generations. But traces of once mostly Manchu Hunchun remain, even as the likes of madamae and the plumber consider themselves old-timers confounded by the parade of Han, Russian, and other less familiar recent arrivals, myself included.

The presence of new foods, languages, and fashions, hand in hand with a PRC-wide boom in leisure consumption, has also transformed Hunchun's nightscape. Depending on my company during the day, evenings were often spent at Berezka, eating stolid Russian fare amid Slavic lace tablecloths; Odumak, whose folksy Chosŏnjok log-cabin aesthetic accompanied a K-Pop soundtrack and hybridized cheese-heavy South Korean-American dishes; or N-Bar, where Russian and Han patrons danced guardedly to gaudy American dance music, northeast Chinese pop, and a Filipino band playing English- and Russian-language rock. All offered spectacular displays of Hunchun's cultural heterogeneity.

Today's Hunchun is thus alive with multiethnic and multilingual migratory histories emerging amid imperious schemes past and present. In order to familiarize myself with how such projects have themselves been analyzed locally, I engaged in ethnographic foraging through shops and libraries throughout Hunchun's cross-border space. From Yanji's Fellow-collector Bookstore (*Cangyou shudian*), to Vladivostok's Moon and Sixpence (*Luna i grosh*) in the historic Millionka Chinatown, the stall in the Pyongyang's Youth (*Ch'ŏngnyŏn*) Hotel's cavernous lobby, or the bookshop behind Yanbian University's College of Marxism, conversations with staff guided me to an appreciation of the interpretations and visibility of works in many genres. These included collections of primary documents from late-Qing and Republican archives and gazetteers (Li S. 1991; Li and Pan 1991), Russian Civil War–era memoirs (Borbat 2015) and compendia (Pak 2013), revolutionary autobiographies (Kim 1999), fiction from northeast China under Japanese occupation (Luo 1984), short stories about Cossacks (Rozhkov 2005) and Russian Manchuria (Shcherbakov 2011), studies of Hunchun's ethnic groups (Jin 1993; Ryu 2000; Yi 2012; Yu 2008; Li N. 1988), locally published

historical pamphlets (Luchsheva 2006; Karpov 2013; Kil and Li 2011), "internal" (Ch. *neibu*) texts for local officials (Liang 1985; Jin and Huang 1987; Liu 1991), leaflets, and brochures promoting Hunchun's post-1990s development (Li B. 1996; Bai 1992; Gu and Qi 1992), and local newspaper archives. Suspended between primary and secondary source status—whatever their objective "truth," many are widely accepted as local History—these texts shaped my work both ethnographically and analytically.[17] My grounded sense of local temporalities, histories, historicities, and historiographies was further deepened as I traced Hunchun's old city walls in consultation with local archivists, and sought out war memorials, Qing ruins, and other historic sites in rural Yanbian, southern Primorye, and North Hamgyŏng.

As I went I discussed what I was learning with local friends, and with madamae. Our conversations, unspooling as we watched television observed from a shelf by a terra-cotta tortoise, which she had bought on a 1980s visit to her late husband's family in North Korea, usually produced distinctly nonlinear responses. Without much input from me, madamae moved from Hunchun's grubby past, to vituperative comments about the man downstairs, and reflections on China's waxing and waning North Korean and Soviet relationships, before circling back—as this Introduction now has—to how much better things in China now were than either of those places. Such framings of progress—and my own interest in interrogating its tenacity—shape how this book itself unfolds.

Outline

Anchoring my work in Hunchun frees the book's narrative to be structured against the grain of the progressivist temporalities it examines. Chapters are thus ordered broadly reverse-chronologically from the present toward the seventeenth century, moving "backwards" through collisions, overlaps, and collapses, tracing cross-border and trans-temporal transferences among accreted remnants of illusory promises. Such a Dubean "warranty"-free history aims to avoid presuppositions about what is inherited and what not from one tumultuous project to the next.

Part I, entitled Posthistory, explores trans-temporal postsocialist encounters among Chinese, Russian, and Korean borderlanders. Chapter 1 shows how progress's pervasiveness as a frame for understanding individuals' and nations' relations

has jarring and often haunting consequences for cross-border meetings around Hunchun among people(s) inhabiting different material spheres. Booming China's growing presence in nearby parts of regressive Russia and stagnant North Korea render the whole Hunchun space a contemporary "frontier of capital," something which—as Chapter 2 shows—complicates another socialist-era totem, "Friendship." As both the official tie between China, Russia, and the DPRK and the most salient relationship in everyday interactions among Hunchun people, Friendship, like progress, coexists at official and vernacular scales and is deeply affected by temporal disjunctures on this triple frontier. Considering the two together offers a new paradigm for understanding how interpersonal and interstate relations intersect in a global age of Chinese capital.

Part II, History, builds on this exploration of Friendship's temporal entanglements, developing my argument that prelapsarian high socialist modernity was just as pervaded by elemental textures as the postsocialism that followed. Chapter 3 discusses the formal synchrony of 1950s high socialist Sino-Soviet-Korean Friendship, which enveloped Hunchun in a totalizing taxonomical order wherein progress, borders, and Friendship were co-constitutive within each nation's linear advancement toward communism. For all the formalized exchanges and compatible histories of this synchronous era, however, unruly humanity animated interstate amity, something all the more evident during the 1960s to 1980s Sino-Soviet Split. Friendship among hyper-rationalist states was in fact akin to an anthropological category of "blood brotherhoods," which socialist planners would have scorned as primitively elemental but which would not have surprised the avowedly fraternal partisan fighters discussed in Chapter 4. Waged against the imposed progressivism of Japanese and Russian empires, their 1910s to 1940s settler struggles for national time sovereignty became the vanguardist proto-Histories of Soviet, PRC, and DPRK power around Hunchun. However orderly the socialist progressivisms that would follow, their success rested on appropriating both mythologies and lived practices of rapacious Manchurian "bandits," meaning that as wild bandit ecology was recast as state territory, rugged terrain, mythic men, and their robustly masculine friendships undergirded socialist statehood from the start.

Finally, Part III, Prehistory, focuses on the compound ends of Qing, Romanov and Chosŏn history around Hunchun, and the town's role in dynastic enterprise under the Manchu-Qing in particular. Drawing on the theoretical framing of

textured temporalities developed throughout the book, Chapter 5 shows how contemporary approaches to landscape and borders around Hunchun freeze them as peripheralized commodities to be consumed, but in doing so fossilize vital dynamisms that lodged Hunchun at the heart of a vast temporal canvas during the Qing's most expansive period.

In the Conclusion I reprise the layered temporal orientations explored throughout the book, and return to a present when many people are leaving the wider region surrounding Hunchun. These reversals of earlier migrations ask questions of progress in a global moment blighted by Eurasian "history wars" and a climate crisis engendered by overconfidence in industrial modernity (Grove 2019).

This non-teleological presentation takes inspiration from illustrator Richard McGuire's (2014) graphic novel *Here*, which, albeit across a wider historical canvas, adopts a spatially fixed but temporally multiple frame to portray a single domestic space in different epochs simultaneously. Comparably palimpsest-like and rooted throughout in contemporary ethnography, this book examines the temporal dynamics of each moment in its own right, moving through putative "posts" (postsocialism, post-empire, post-industry, postcolony) without presupposing natural inheritances from one to the next. Also seeking to reflect the relative immediacy of different histories and historicities for Hunchun people today, I follow Ann Anagnost's (1997: 6) "genealogical" approach to social and historical phenomena, which encourages sensitivity to "resonances across time" without "set[ting] them into a continuous evolutionary narrative." Endurances from one moment to the next are not ignored here, but a reader—however persuaded by modernity that "now" can only be understood in terms of what notionally preceded it—may trace these free of assumed teleologies or foreclosed alternative inheritances. Formalist efforts to confront the forwardism shared by contemporary borderlanders, anthropologists, and historians alike nevertheless do have their limits: this, after all, is still a book contained between two covers read, as Latin script and English syntax dictate, left to right. Important discussion of people remaining stuck on the idea of progress still lies at the "front" of the book, the place one goes in search of key information. And so it is in the inescapably immediate present that we begin.

PART I

POSTHISTORY

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CHAPTER 1

Postsocialism's Temporal Collisions

> Years later various Russian politicians and economists would look at the economic miracle unfolding in south China and say "Guangzhou and Shenzhen's today is Russia's tomorrow," but in the 1950s even in our wildest dreams we couldn't have imagined that such a day would come. . . .
>
> TONG QINGBING 童庆炳. *Old Dreams and Distant Mountains* 旧梦与远山 (2015: 97)

Specters of Progress

"Much about Hunchun," says Liuba, a Russian pensioner living in the town, "reminds us Russian citizens of our old multinational Soviet Union. It's there in people's attitudes, in their actions, the construction and development, the emphasis on science, safety, and affordable prices . . ." She surveys the lakeside park where we are sitting on concrete stools modeled to look like tree stumps. "Look," she continues, "you see it in the flowers and trees, the parks and squares, in the orchards where we find those famous Hunchun apples, and improvement to local ecology."

Liuba's musings gesture at a perception common worldwide that crossing a border entails entering a new space where the atmosphere of "development," "modernity," or orderliness differs from the place one has just left. Since the onset of European colonialism and the euphemized "Age of Discovery," differential senses of advancement or backwardness have been inseparable from many travelers' experiences of new places (Campbell 1988: 9). In the twenty-first century, global mobility engenders temporal experiences with "deep material and

affective impacts" (Robertson 2021: 4), and foreign countries, to invert an overused L. P. Hartley commonplace, may embody the past, or indeed the future.

Yet however similar to phenomena elsewhere, Sino-Russian border crossings like Liuba's have a distinctive valence, for it is not simply that Russia and China are seen to exist in different places in time, static points along a line running from less to more developed, or materially richer or poorer. For reasons explored throughout this book, China and Russia are not places whose relationship is defined primarily in terms of developed and developing, or a colony "catching up" to a metropole (Chakrabarty 2000: 9) (even if the part of Russia from which Liuba comes was ceded by Qing China in the 1860s). Rather, each country's intense and entangled engagement with specifically socialist ideas of progress and modernity, their upsurges, collapses and imbrication with unruly human life, means that citizens of both perceive cross-border difference in terms of temporal *movement* rather than fixed temporal state.

Collisions between senses of temporal trajectory are produced immediately on crossing the short distance from Hunchun to Liuba's coastal hometown of Slavianka, or to the North Korean locations that also feature in this chapter (map fig. I.3). This has much to do with the fact that, as elaborated in Chapter 3, local border crossers carry with them a vernacular counterpart to the distinctively "modern" idea of nation-states as bounded protagonists of linear History (Chatterjee 1993: 95): however routinely traversed, national borders delimit zones that appear to move through time in different ways. Yet as suggested by Liuba's allusion to the haunting traces of defunct Soviet social mores, security, economics, ecology, and urban design, everyday temporal visions also evoke an imaginative realm foggier than the linear world of bordered statehood. For Russians in China, or for Chinese people in North Korea, progresses past and present have a distinctly spectral quality.

Ghosts and progress have a close if ambivalent relationship in (post)socialist countries like the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). As Carlos Rojas (2016: 1) observes, such specters are Janus-like, bearing "a retrospective as well as an anticipatory valence" in relation to the linear pasts and futures promised by socialism. During successive projects to make Marx and Engels' specter of communism assume real-existing material form, progressive projects have wrought correspondingly bidirectional haunting effects in their forward ebbs and backward flows across

Eurasia. Russians coming to Hunchun today leave a country speckled with hundreds of "specter-villages" (*derevni-prizraki*), depopulated settlements economically abandoned after Soviet collapse and particularly numerous in the Russian Far East. Yet from these spaces haunted by progress's collapse (cf. Gordillo 2011; Gupta 2018), they arrive in a place whose economic boom and robust culture of "futurity" (Greenspan 2014) have generated a landscape of suburban "ghost towns" (*guicheng*), eerie forests of apartment buildings that monumentalize runaway developmental optimism. In the PRC and DPRK "vestigial" socialist institutions still preside intact over heterodox spectropolitical presents (Rojas 2016: 5), while populations in all three countries have worldviews informed by the enduring imprint of what Anna Kruglova (2017) calls "vernacular Marxism." Twenty-first-century lives around Hunchun are thus stalked by postsocialist cousins to the phantom that hovered over nineteenth-century Europe, ghosts with the capacity to manifest both "an alternative history that is denied to the present" and one which "might yet find realization in a world to come" (Hillenbrand 2020: 39–40). The haunting effects of futures and pasts, realized or unrealized, are especially poignant in what for Liuba and all residents of this area is an immanently material Chinese present.

Forward and Outward

Apparitions of China's justifiably vaunted "rise" have loomed throughout the world in myriad material and immaterial ways since the 1980s. Previously unseen movements of products and people have accompanied the less tangible yet equally substantial effects of a wholesale reorientation in global economics and politics. But if the idea of a "rise" at the state level implies vertical ascent up an imaginary hierarchy of nations, driven in vanguardist fashion by those exhorted by Deng Xiaoping to "get rich first," then for ordinary people living around China's edges the primary vectors of movement have been experienced as forward and outward rather than upward. To Chinese citizens and their neighbors alike, persuasive signs of the PRC's advancement along a progressive historical path have emerged with the horizontal spread of China-centered circulations of people, goods, and capital into bordering countries.

Spatial expansion and temporal progress have been conceptually wedded as mainstays of national and imperial projects throughout their devastating histories. As Dipesh Chakrabarty notes, in the mercantilist world of European

colonialism "historicist" post-Enlightenment thought "made modernity or capitalism look not simply global but rather as something that became global *over time*, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it" (Chakrabarty 200: 7, stress in original). At the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, 1960s and 1970s Maoist internationalism also married temporal teleology and global proliferation (Ci 1994: 43–45). It is this dual impulse for forward movement and spatial spread, common to socialist and capitalist visions of progress, that I have in mind when referring to "expansivism" in what follows.

Building on discussion in the Introduction of how progressive projects map new temporalities onto new territory, this chapter documents the everyday temporal effects of Chinese progressivism's radiation into neighboring Russia and North Korea. Hunchun's transnational surrounds increasingly constitute a frontier for projections of Chinese time and history, a radical reconfiguration of the entangled Chinese, Soviet, and Korean linear socialist modernities documented elsewhere in this book. As the Rise of China is enacted in the aftermath of state socialism's diverse Eurasian demises, diffusely immaterial forms of forward and outward movement are distinctly postmodern counterparts to the solidities of high modernism, yet nonetheless reveal that progressive temporality remains intrinsic to how people experience nation- and statehood, in socialism and beyond. This emerges from an array of cross-cultural, cross-border and international contact around Hunchun, which I explore here, building on Liuba's evocation of the Soviet past transposed to a Chinese future. Hunchun people of all backgrounds live surrounded by material evidence of the deficiencies of past progress, with differential economic trajectories between an expansive China and troubled neighboring parts of eastern Russia and northeastern DPRK lending time itself a "fractured" character since the 1990s (Billé 2016). But even after state socialism's interrupted teleologies, progress still serves as a common benchmark by which people of different national and ethnic groups negotiate their encounters.

I focus first on the expansive atmosphere encountered by Liuba, particularly in relation to various Hunchun-centered regional development projects conceived since high socialism's end. After examining Sino-Russian contact, I then shift to the third, Korean, side of the triangle. As Chinese visitors to the DPRK reflect on the perceived "backwardness" of the place, the bidirectional promise of progress's ghosts amid tripartite temporal disjuncture emerges more

clearly. Yet to examine these progressivisms primarily on an international basis misses the vernacular forms—and particularly an earthy genderedness—that progress takes on in practice. In contrast to the slick universalizing visions of cross-border cooperation promoted between states, China-rooted expansivism is driven by a robust twenty-first-century frontier masculinity, and the most prominent cyphers of PRC capital include frontier industries such as casinos and illicit seafood trading. As I show in the latter part of the chapter, such activity both reveals the inescapable groundedness of China's "rise" in a culturally heterogenous setting, and challenges us to reappraise our sense of the gender of development in a post-Mao China described as facing a "crisis of masculinity." On a broader background of frontier-making across Asia (Cons and Eilenberg 2019), therefore, these less-seen dimensions to an imperiously economic and political drama carry weight beyond the local, reverberating throughout a wider world haunted by specters of progress.

Progress as Destination

Wittingly or otherwise, Liuba saw that Hunchun's developmental atmosphere results from practices that would indeed have been familiar to Soviet planners. The buoyancy of such a modestly sized place owes much to its status as a "county-level municipality" (*xianji shi*), a type of entity summoned into existence by post-2012 reforms that administratively "urbanized" (*chengzhenhua*) locations across China, including in the borderlands (Bulag and Joniak-Lüthi 2016). Hunchun itself and its expansive rural surroundings thus together constitute a single municipal area. Such reclassifications, distinct from urbanization (*dushihua*) via growth of existing metropolises, involve "imagining the rural as a potentially urban site,"[1] a strategy that has been a hallmark of PRC and Soviet territorial management alike. Both the 1917 Bolshevik and—still more so—the 1949 CCP revolutions had substantially rural roots, and the decades following each saw towns in both states become beacons of future-ward progress and rationality, even if they also remained potentially menacing sites of anti-government resistance (Jaros 2019: 7).

Beyond administrative reclassification by fiat, and thanks to vast quantities of future-oriented finance and hope invested here by the Chinese central authorities, Hunchun's "urbanization" has seen the erstwhile county seat undergo

extraordinary demographic and infrastructural expansion since the 2000s. Official documents such as 2017's "General Program for Hunchun City 2016–2030"[2] describe ambitious building and "greening" (*lühua*) plans, including a new bridge towering over the Hunchun River, a World Bank–backed high-speed railway direct to Beijing (Hunchun's first passenger train service) (World Bank 2016), a vast shopping center, and urban tree planting.[3] Capital inflows totaled over 100 billion yuan (c. US$16 billion) in 2014 alone, and the creation of a border trade area and a Development Zone (*kaifa qu*) of the kind by which hundreds of Chinese cities announce their pursuit of post-Reform developmentalism reflect national-level visions of Hunchun as a northeast Asian logistics hub. Russian admiration of the town's construction, urban beautification, and neon-lit atmosphere of "tempestuous" development (*burnoe razvitie*) show how such formal initiatives are read in vernacular ways.

Another consequence of this surging expansion is that following even the most up-to-date maps of Hunchun is difficult, particularly when moving around the outskirts. On the eastern side of town toward a peripheral village named Machuanzi, ranks of new apartment blocks march over what was once rice paddies (fig. 1.1). Less monumental but more exclusive developments nearby include "Spain Town," a compound of terra-cotta-roofed villas endorsed on posters—perhaps unwittingly—by Hong Kong singer and actor Kenny Bee 鍾鎮濤. As I navigated Hunchun during early fieldwork I found that while some maps simply omitted new projects like these, others depicted all kinds of things that had not yet been completed or, equally likely, even started. This was just one hint at the ubiquity here of what Yomi Braester (2016: 16) calls a "politics of emergence" whereby anticipated construction is celebrated as though already complete, or the "neomodernity" defined by Anna Greenspan (2014: xvi) as "an altogether different future that is not relative but rather real and absolute." Writing from Beijing and Shanghai respectively, Braester and Greenspan describe megalopolitical nodes of China's twenty-first-century development far from this postsocialist borderland. But whatever the distance, the sense of an expansive future already manifesting in the present is certainly shared by many in Hunchun.

One summer evening my Sino-Russian event-coordinating friend Vova and I were invited to dinner by Director Hong, head of the Hunchun government foreign relations office. Vova's girlfriend Sasha also joined us. But our meal at a local Chosŏnjok-run lamb skewer restaurant—a Hunchun specialty that reflects

FIGURE 1.1: New apartments march out of eastern Hunchun (photo by author, September 2015). Compare the animated opening sequence of Soviet film *Irony of Fate* (*Ironiia sud'by*, 1975).

the town's continuing reliance, despite its urbanism, on an image of ecological purity—finished quickly, and it became clear that Hong's main aim was to take us for a post-dinner drive. He had something to show us, he said.

Now in his fifties, Hong had spent most of his career as a People's Liberation Army border guard, and though speaking no Russian was reliably present at Russian community events from football matches to funerals. In the car, sporting his trademark baggy black tracksuit and clumpy leather shoes, he spoke animatedly about Hunchun's internationalization (*guojihua*), delighted that we—a Korean Russian (Vova), a Russian (Sasha), a British person (me), and a Chinese person (him)—were all together speaking Chinese. This, he said, reflected Hunchun's civilization (*wenming*). Such meta-discursive themes were staples of my conversations with local Chinese people throughout fieldwork: my very presence seemed a recurrent invocation of Hunchun's transformations. Hong's interactions with Vova had a similar flavor, and so it was unsurprising when the latter asked—as we turned onto a road skirting the town's southern edge—whether we were going to the Development Zone just across the Hunchun River. No, Hong

intoned, the destination was not the district itself but a bridge to it which had just opened that day. Indeed, we were already there.

The sun sets early in this easternmost part of China, even in summer, and so the 7:00 p.m. gloom made it difficult to discern what was remarkable about this bridge. It was neither particularly high nor long, but Hong explained:

> "This new bridge means you don't have to cross town to get to the Development Zone any more—it cuts ten minutes off the journey! And look, the streetlights are like the ones on Tiananmen Square."

The rush to open the bridge had seemingly not afforded time to get these symbolic anchors to Beijing linked to the power network, however, and so they too were hard to make out through the darkness. Nevertheless, the bridge was open and a few clusters of vehicles by the roadside suggested that we were not its only admirers. In the back of the car Vova looked nonplussed as his phone rang again. For much of the ride he had been fielding calls from his mother back in the Russian town of Ussuriisk—she wanted him to help find a graveyard plot for a Koryŏ saram family friend. Well connected both sides of the border, Vova was constantly being asked to do such things.

"I don't know why she keeps calling!" he said with exasperation. "There's nothing I can do from here. Anyway yes Director Hong, the bridge is good." I too voiced some words of encouragement.

Undeterred by our tepid response, Hong drove us on over the bridge, turning right along the northern edge of the Development Zone. On one side of the road loomed the hulking galleries of the under-construction Hunchun Border Trade Building, which he promised would soon be home to Russian, South and North Korean companies.

Our evening excursion to a hurriedly opened and unlit extension of the town's traffic network, which allowed for slightly faster access to a Development Zone containing not-yet-open businesses, lucidly reflected the future's already present status for Hunchun people. Progress itself is the destination.

Yet illuminated by the glow from the trade building construction site lurked a sight more ambivalent than this shiny vision of the not-yet. Across the road was a row of houses, unfinished but also dilapidated, two-story concrete frames with gaping windows, doors, and faux chimneys (fig. 1.2). These, it turned out, were the ruins of exclusive "villas" (*bieshu*) built in a fit of developmental optimism

FIGURE 1.2: Unfinished ruins near Hunchun Development Zone (photo by author, August 2015).

during the late 1990s but since abandoned. Similar unfinished but decades-old projects dot the hillsides between Hunchun and the Russian border.

Sasha asked what the buildings were and Director Hong explained their rough provenance. But he showed little taste for the subject.

"The financing probably ran out," he said matter-of-factly. "They're not interesting."

These monuments to development's layered incoherence—known by the term *lanweilou*, which evokes the festering of interrupted dreams—reveal the bidirectional orientation of progress's ghosts in Hunchun. New buildings or bridges may advance in ranks or perform temporal leaps to carry the spirit of progress forward, but they also sweep over the haunted remains of earlier, and often quite recent, abandoned futures. As elsewhere across urbanizing China, Hunchun is a palimpsest space where "a brave new world glimmers through semitransparent vestiges of other temporalities" (Braester 2016: 21).

Such interrupted teleologies have real consequences for ordinary people's choices over how to live, work, and raise families, and so these concrete shells embody both stalled macro-level development and redirected life courses from an

early sub-period within China's Reform Era. In some PRC locations where rapid construction has come up short—for example parts of Sichuan devasted by a 2008 earthquake that killed over 85,000 people—ruined futures have become sites of political contestation (Sorace 2017: 76). But in borderland Hunchun, temporal interruption has had political effects more redolent of other (post)socialist sites of continuously layered developmental endeavors. As in the transforming Saigon studied by Erik Harms (2016: 2–11), here "noncynical dreams of a city yet to come" are coproduced by *both* the rubble of defunct projects *and* the opulence of new ones.

Writing of never-finished "failed" construction in the Soviet Far North, Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (2016: 692) observes that the USSR's adherence to a "teleological time orientation of . . . continuous construction" made such failures "not so much endpoints . . . as turning points in a continuous series of projects." In the Soviet case this juddering progressivism was entombed by political collapse, but the structural integrity of the PRC Party-state into the postsocialist era has allowed for a comparable paradigm of continuous construction—and thus also constant deferral—to remain a feature rather than a bug of post-Mao progressivism.[4] As in Ssorin-Chaikov's USSR, or ruinous European imperial projects globally (Stoler 2013), accumulation of "debris" in the form of unfinished villas or ghost towns simply reflects the relentless push for newness, a hypnotic and engrossing pas de deux of luxury and rubble (Harms 2016). As I will show, the fact that Russians near Hunchun witnessed a massively accelerated buildup of debris with the Soviet crash critically shapes their perspective on Hunchun-based construction. But first I examine more closely the "continuous series of projects" that have framed Hunchun's development. The outward movement of new buildings away from the town's fringes—a march of skyscrapers evoking the opening sequence of iconic Soviet film *Irony of Fate*—represents a localized vanguard for Hunchun's expansive futurism, and for China's wider speculative "politics of destination" (J. Chu 2010).

Expansion

Director Hong's indifference spoke of how earlier futures matter little for people borne along by layering progressivisms. Indeed, fifty-something Hong was living a generational vision of development, embodied by his beloved trade zones and traffic tendrils, whose blunt materiality already seemed behind the curve. As the PRC pursues progress in artificial intelligence, mobile technology, space travel, and other spheres imagined to be unencumbered by physical friction,

geographical location, or perhaps even human involvement, siting, zoning, and movement of goods appear quaint vestiges of early post-Mao decades. Yet Hong's views also show that the spatiality of territory and terrain remains a stubborn reality around Hunchun. The adjacency of international borders, the immediate interactions of diverse populations, and the distinctive collisions of temporal orientations here all force a reckoning with proximity.

Consequently, eminently spatial forward and outward impulses pervade communication of every genre in Hunchun, from daily conversation to the above-mentioned maps, and billboards displaying sweeping webs of regional connection. Throughout town, the September 2015 opening of the high-speed railway was a source of particular anticipation, with breathless discussion of both the convenience it would offer within China and its mooted extension across the Russian border to Vladivostok. From mid-2015 cartographic projections of this elongation adorned Hunchun's Russian border crossing alongside a poster depicting presidents Xi and Putin jovially shaking hands. These new visions joined existing maps of the immediate northeast Asian neighborhood, which appear everywhere from the walls of the Hunchun bus station to barriers surrounding construction sites and the backs of local officials' business cards (fig. 1.3). Such images make Hunchun people hyper-aware of their geopolitical setting, encouraging expansive thoughts both temporal and spatial. The Chinese term

FIGURE 1.3: Building site hoardings showing Hunchun region map (photo by author, October 2015). Caption reads "Opening Hunchun" (*kaifang Hunchun* / *kaebangdoen Hunchun*).

pan, used here to describe anticipation of new infrastructural projects, encodes a sense of "looking forward" or "longing" but also "gazing," projecting one's aspiration into an imminent future, along radiating spokes of connection outward to neighboring countries.

Hunchun's visual and conceptual emplacement at the heart of these projections, as a hub (*shuniu*) or, in the words of posters and pamphlets, a "new gateway" (*xin menhu*) for northeast Asia,[5] has occurred under successive postsocialist development projects. As Chinese, Soviet, and North Korean socialisms buckled during the 1980s to 1990s, optimism for a possible cross-border "common future" (Akaha and Vassilieva 2005: 2) found expression in the UNESCO-supported Tumen River Area Development Project (TRADP). Chinese and Soviet reforms or collapse, and the apparently conciliatory mood of Kim Il Sung in his final years, promised a chance to move beyond the fractious Sino-Soviet Split and unite on a newly synchronous neoliberal timeline. Formally launched in 1995, the initiative envisioned creation of a triangular free-trade zone—initially Hunchun-Rajin-Posyot, later Yanji-Chongjin-Vladivostok (map fig. I.3)—with participation from China, Russia, both Koreas, Japan, and Mongolia. Targeted infrastructural investment and liberalized movement of people and capital was meant to synergistically marry Chinese and North Korean labor, Russian resources, and South Korean and Japanese financing.

Accelerating forward, Hunchun was readied for this future even before the formal start of TRADP. Following a 1988 upgrade from "county" (*xian*) to "city" (*shi*) status, in March 1992 Hunchun was designated an open border town (*bianjing kaifang chengshi*) by the PRC State Council (Guo 1992: 8), with the local Border Economic Cooperation Zone established six months later (Fang and Jin 1993: 153). Citizens learned of these momentous changes from a deluge of TRADP-focused literature, which, issued by provincial, prefectural, and city governments, universities and media bodies, still sits in piles in regional secondhand bookshops. Bearing utopian titles such as *Pearl of Northeast Asia—Hunchun* (Fang and Jin 1993) and *Dawn of the Golden Triangle* (Wang 1994), volumes with colorful clip-art covers outline incentives and regulations for investors (Li B. 1996); describe itineraries for travel to nearby Russia and North Korea (Bai 1992); explain the history and culture of Hunchun and nearby countries (Gu and Qi 1992); and offer expertise on the Tumen area's prospects in banking, logistics, and agriculture (Jiao 1994).

This publicity boom firmly harnessed Hunchun to China's broader post-socialist progressivism. Labeling the town a Northeast Asian "pearl" evoked Guangdong's Pearl River Delta, cradle of China's reformist experiments, while in a preface to one volume, municipal CCP chairman Fang Min compared activities in Hunchun to Deng Xiaoping's famous 1992 "southern tour" of special economic zones (Wang 1994: 1). Transmission lines from Hunchun to Beijing through Yanbian prefecture and Jilin province were further reinforced by the advocacy of then-Yanbian prefectural secretary Zhang Dejiang. A graduate of both Yanbian University and Pyongyang's Kim Il Sung University, Zhang's political rise would eventually see him ascend, via secretary of Jilin, Zhejiang, and Guangdong provinces, to a Politburo Standing Committee role as China's third-highest-ranking politician between 2013 and 2018. But long before this, Zhang contributed calligraphy to the cover of a 1992 book *The Hope of Open Border Towns*, which declared that Hunchun—like other Sino-Russian entrepots Heihe, Suifenhe, and Manzhouli—must "grab the historic opportunity" to develop (Guo 1992: 192).

If coupling local and national futures meant having one eye on Beijing, outward gazes were still more crucial to the newly imagined trade and travel routes branching out from Hunchun. In a spirit redolent of Penny Harvey and Dimitris Dalakoglu's (2012) observations of how temporal and spatial projections are married when new roads are laid, Jilin deputy provincial head Jin Zhezhu wrote in 1994:

> Handled by the UN development plan and the relevant countries, and especially with China's active participation and backing, TRADP has made substantial progress and has opened up a *beautiful vista* [*meihao qianjing*]! (Jiao 1994: 1, my stress).

For Hunchun people, prospects included links over the Soviet border to the east and an expanded southerly realm of contact with North and South Korea, the latter of which was—after Beijing's 1992 diplomatic recognition of Seoul—becoming a "capitalist frontier" of enrichment and self-realization for local Chosŏnjok (Park 2015: 134). Developing the Hunchun frontier meant a new era of civilization as—in the words of one local official—"the people of the hills took the road to riches" (Zhao 1994).

Yet bumps would soon appear on this futureward road. Widespread optimism quickly hit several snags as Japan withdrew and South Korea reduced participation amid deteriorating relations with the North following Kim Il Sung's

death in 1994. Along a similar trajectory to the frozen-in-time villas, the project was functionally moribund by 1998, dashing hopes that a coherent northeast Asian "microregion" might emerge (Hughes 2002; Rozman 1995).

For Hunchun, however, the concatenation of forward and outward vectors barreled on, building on top of these now-defunct futures. Largely at PRC instigation, in 2005 TRADP was rebranded the Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI) and reconceived as a looser arrangement with participant states committing to trade, tourism, transportation, energy, and—in a rare concession to more conservative temporality—environmental cooperation (Park 2016: 373). With China assuming an enlarged investment role after two decades of capitalist growth, equable transnationalism would be shelved and the inhabitants of the Hunchun triangle would cooperate under Chinese auspices. Demise was officially recast as an index of positive change, eliding with vernacular senses of destruction as inherent to progress.

Not everything was unambiguously futuristic. Consistent with the Janus-like qualities of progress's ghosts, new cross-border projections of Chinese futures awoke restless spirits of China's past. Since the 1990s, Hunchun people's enthusiasm for Tumen-based projects has accompanied retrospective interest in age-old questions around access to the Sea of Japan (Pulford 2016). Remember, residents say when asked their views of neighboring Russia, that the nearby coastline up to Vladivostok—encompassing Liuba's and Vova's hometowns—used to be "China." Specifics around this history are often vague: some say Russia took the land directly, while others blame Japan. Contemporary expansiveness evokes returns to something older.

Whether looking forward or back, however, those in the cross-border Tumen space have increasingly been living on a new Chinese timeline, part of an expansive, finance-driven "frontier of capitalism" like that described by Anna Tsing (2005). I return to this idea later after exploring how Hunchun's seaward and future-ward visions collide with contrasting temporal orientations among the gazed-upon.

Nuptial Nostalgia

In November 2015 Alesha, a Russian friend and classmate of mine, hopped over the border with his girlfriend, Vika, to get married in Kraskino, his hometown.

I joined them, the only non-Russian wedding guest despite Alesha's network of Chinese acquaintances from years of on-and-off residence in Hunchun and Yanji. If the party's demographics were one indication of the relational divide marked by the China-Russia border—explored in the next chapter—then the setting also revealed the temporal collisions that occur as forward/outward waves of broadly "Chinese" things—capital, people, commodities, and visions—radiate into less futurist parts of the neighboring "foreign" world.

During Soviet times, Kraskino—a "settlement of urban type" (*poselok gorodskogo tipa*) administratively urbanized like many Chinese towns—had a strategic location and military heritage which brought a sense of forced tranquility.[6] But privilege under one historical regime translated to damnation under another, and the USSR's demise was disastrous. Perestroika-era redistribution of resources and a thaw in Sino-Russian relations saw three locally stationed regiments withdrawn during the 1990s, depriving the town of much of its raison d'être.[7] With the departure of their clientele, Kraskino's productive industries shut down, from the local bakery and small factories making dairy products and carbonated drinks to the *sovkhoz*, where mink were bred for fur. In a story reproduced across the Russian Far East, the population of the settlement declined from around 4,400 in 1989 to under 2,500 today, a disproportionate share of the exodus comprising younger residents.[8] As schools and businesses closed, those who remained consolidated what was left, creating the hollowed-out feeling that now pervades the settlement. A few well-connected residents, including the former *sovkhoz* chairman, sold off any assets they could get their hands on and built multistory villas, while abandoned municipal buildings were cannibalized for construction materials as people walled in newly individualized household plots. Alesha's old nursery school still lies in jagged ruins several doors away from his family home, long closed and looted. With its patchwork of prerevolutionary wooden houses (*izby*), once-grand dilapidated public edifices, Soviet dereliction and occasional post-Soviet architectural whimsy, Kraskino today is a material expression of socialist history's juddering disintegration into a baffling array of fragmented vernacular historicities. Those with resources do not bother to repair Soviet ruins, but build anew. A far cry from Hunchun's festive neon, Kraskino has no functioning streetlights to illuminate its potholed roads, and along the dark roads flit the specters of drug addiction, alcoholism, and premature mortality: at thirty, Alesha had already learned of the gruesome deaths

of three of his middle-school classmates. Having lived here since the age of two (he was born in Kharkiv, Ukraine, where his mother studied during the 1980s), Alesha had been raised in tandem with this unimaginable upheaval. Kraskino, he states darkly, is now squalid (*ubogii*), an "anti-utopia" (*anti-utopia*), an arse (*zhopa*) of a place.

By contrast, twenty-seven-year-old Vika grew up and attended university in Novosibirsk, Siberia's capital and Russia's third largest city. Her parents, rebellious late-Soviet youths, instilled in her a love for the Beatles and an exploratory worldview befitting the chaotic idealism of 1990s really urban Russia. After graduation, this outlook took Vika to a job in Vladivostok, from there to Hunchun on a weekend shopping trip with a colleague, and from there to a local Russian-owned bar, where Alesha was working the cloakroom. The pair hit it off right away despite their contrasting origins. Indeed Vika's cosmopolitan background seemed as exotic to Alesha as China did: it was amazing to realize that anti-establishment city dwellers like her parents saw in perestroika a new era of possibility when in small-town Primorye no one had particularly asked for the "Changes" demanded in 1987 by Soviet Korean rocker Viktor Tsoi. Here reform meant only ruination on a scale that was hard to explain as part of any progressive project. Little wonder that China would soon come to work its ghostly effects just over the border.

Yet Kraskino was home, and, as so often in Russia's depopulated and economically depressed eastern outposts, the hospitality was unstinting as we gathered for the blustery wedding. Celebrations of marriage are themselves both past- and future-oriented as consolidatory and reproductive community events, but unfolding in a field of decades-old debris, this one was particularly retrospective. After formal registration in the regional center Slavianka, around thirty friends and relatives from Kraskino and nearby villages—some mere meters from China—gathered in the unfinished kitchen extension Alesha's stepdad was grafting onto their house. Reflecting Alesha's transforming tastes during his years over the border, the dinner included dishes from a Slavianka Chinese restaurant alongside Russian salads, *kholodets*, fried potatoes, and *khe*[9] prepared by his mother, Vera. This was washed down with twenty-six bottles of Chinese goji berry *baijiu*, imported piecemeal over months by Alesha and his friends (including me), each bringing our three-liter customs allowance when crossing from Hunchun. Two hours in, the raucous party divided into one

drunken group dancing inside to slick Russian dance pop and a smaller drunken group outside arguing and trying to separate family members intent on fighting one another. Insults were exchanged but physical violence was averted, and late into the night everyone dispersed, staggering or driving home inebriated through the pitch black.

The following day over fresh spider crab from the nearby cove, dipped in wasabi and soy sauce and washed down with chunky bottles of Budweiser to combat the *baijiu* headache, Alesha's stepdad, Aleksandr, apologized to me for the flaring tempers and the modesty of the occasion. I insisted—truthfully—that I thought everything had been great. But Aleksandr continued, explaining:

> "In the past this would have been bigger. In the Union [*pri Soiuze*] the whole settlement would attend each other's parties. Neighbors knew and spoke to one another, children gave up their seats on the bus. We lived as friends [*my zhili druzhno*]."

Aleksandr was not alone during this and other Kraskino visits in pointing to the political cataclysm of the Soviet collapse as a cause of deeper ethical reversal. As we sat eating in the yard, Alesha's uncle Stepa popped into the house, returning with Volume IX of the 1978 Soviet *Children's Encyclopedia*, over which he and Aleksandr reminisced, pointing out pictures of the Cruiser *Aurora* and paintings of Lenin. Kraskino was not always like it is now, they said, with all the mess (*bardak*) and idiocy (*debilizm*). These days, I was told, Russians are estranged, and the prevailing post-Soviet rule is "every man for himself" (*kazhdyi za sebia*).

Post-Soviet nostalgia is far from unique to Kraskino, and recollections such as Aleksandr and Stepa's often amount to remembrances of a morality produced not so much by intentional Soviet projects as by shared lives of aesthetic and material monotony. As Alexei Yurchak's pitch-perfect encapsulation puts it, this is "longing for the very real humane values, ethics, friendships and creative possibilities that the realities of socialism afforded—*often in spite of the state's proclaimed goals*—and that were as irreducibly part of the everyday life of socialism as were the feelings of dullness and alienation" (2006: 8, my stress). But whether for or against the state, Kraskino residents' reminiscences are lodged within the arrested temporality of their ruined surrounds, an affective state redolent of the stasis documented by anthropologists in other postsocialist locations.

As Stef Jansen notes from Dayton Accord–era Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevans lead lives episodically punctuated by urgent "chases" after resources, opportunities, or documents, but these unfold in a wider national "meantime" suspended between a defunct Yugoslav era and an infinitely deferred Bosnian "Road to Europe," an affliction Jansen diagnoses as "Daytonitis" (2015: 12; 158). As in Sarajevo, in Kraskino temporal orientations are tied to wider political contexts wherein a "normative value of forward movement" makes stasis feel like regression. But while Jansen's interlocutors yearn for domestic "statecraft" that would hypothetically remedy their spatiotemporal condition (18–19), Kraskino residents' yardstick for progress is often displaced over the nearby border.

As was clear in Liuba's abovementioned musings, the Chinese expansivism coinciding with post-Soviet decay has also materialized in many of the constructionist totems that once sustained Soviet statism. Indeed, the association—however rose-tinted—of defunct Soviet development with humane values also creates a prism through which older non-Chinese-speaking Russians (who thus engage less deeply with local Chinese society) interpret today's China as a more ethical place. Russia, by contrast, appears to Kraskino locals as an "unintelligible" (*neponiatno*) swamp of moral rudderlessness where the lack of a "national idea" in Aleksandr's words creates a *vinigret* (the name of a popular salad) of confused morals. This would be a forceful enough contrast if these were merely the impressions of people simply glimpsing snapshots of two quite different countries. But poignantly, Chinese developmentalism and post-Soviet slump have been experienced on both sides as a decades-long *process*. Cross-border neighbors have thus acquired a durational sense of their own and others' respective place in time, making temporal movement—not just relative past or future position—a key component of identity within encounters between them.

Transverse Vectors

Anthropological work charting the post-1990s disappearance of statehood and livelihoods across the post-Soviet world has often discussed how people in Russia (Seabright 2000), Central and Eastern Europe (Verdery 1996), or Mongolia (Sneath and Humphrey 2004) contrast their current predicaments with socialist pasts. The proximity of a more successful postsocialist Other as a counterpoint is thus a less typical situation. But as Hunchun's boom and optimism around TRADP and GTI have accompanied a transverse process of deflation in southern

Primorye, many Russians and some Chinese people too have been left with the sense that the fumbled baton of Soviet progressivism has been picked up over the border. Conversations with Kraskino resident Vera showed how the apparent dialectic between Russian regression (*regress*) and Chinese progress is more intense because, since the beginning, Russians themselves have shepherded flows of Chinese goods and capital into their own environments.

"Hunchun was nothing then," said Vera, recalling her early trips in 1994–95. At first Primorye locals visiting China did so as *pomogaiki* ("helpers"),[10] departing with nothing and accompanying 50 kg of goods (the maximum personal allowance) back home on behalf of Russia-based importers. For a time, the collapse of the Russian Far East's Soviet-era industries and supply lines had left the region reliant on Chinese trade for mere subsistence.

"We'd cross to China but wouldn't even enter Hunchun. They'd set up a warehouse market near the border selling shoes, clothes, household goods," said Vera. The dilapidated brick sheds of this commercial—and actually completed—counterpart to Hunchun's crumbling villas still flank the road between the town and the border. "You'd pick up preprepared packages [*bauly*] according to what the boss had ordered. People took their children so they could bring extra weight," she added. "We'd get two hundred rubles per person for the trip, and if you started early, you could even make two round trips in a day."

The fact that early Russian *pomogaiki* remained in limbo between Hunchun and the border, shuttling to and fro crammed with luggage onto buses like "herrings in a barrel" (*sel'dy v bochke*), reflects the Chinese side's wariness around these initial visits. Indeed, owing to its remoteness and double-border position, Hunchun was slower in receiving outsiders than other Sino-Russian locations, lagging in the nationwide race for prosperity. Only after surveying opening-up processes in other border towns in Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia did local officials feel confident in relaxing regulations (Guo 1992: 159). Soon enough though, Vera recalled, it became possible to go to Hunchun overnight (*na nochovku*). The *pomogaika*'s basic role remained similar—that is, importing goods back into Russia for a third party—but staying in a hotel in Hunchun proper meant one could also shop a little for oneself.

"You went out thin and came back fat," Vera joked. "Because you still had to take your 50 kg, you couldn't carry much. But you'd return wearing ten pairs of trousers or a huge coat to stuff things into, even in summer. In those days

Chinese vodka came in bags, so we'd fill our clothes with them." This stage of contact in the late 1990s and early 2000s saw Russians get a more direct impression of Hunchun just as it embarked along accelerating developmental vectors.

"It was such a village then," Vera recalled, "far worse than our Kraskino. But it rose so fast thanks to the *pomogaiki*." Widespread assertions of Russian contributions to Hunchun's rise are overblown given the town's vast China-based investments. But these claims express the deep sense that the mantle of forward movement has been transferred—in hand-to-hand material fashion—across the border, with awe-inspiring results. On her last visit Vera reported recognizing nothing of the small town she first frequented.

The dizzying atmospherics of this cross-border reorientation have been reinforced as cyphers of Chinese development have radiated deep into the frontier around Hunchun. Following the suggestive spokes on the town's ubiquitous maps, two generations of Kraskino residents have now ferried the fruits of China's consumer boom to Russia as the strict regime of prepacked *bauly* has given way to more relaxed visits. Besides the goji berry *baijiu*, all the decorations for Alesha and Vika's wedding, and Alesha's brother's before that, were brought from Hunchun. His stepdad's new kitchen had also been transported to Kraskino bit by bit with fittings, window frames, floor tiles, and other materials arriving in Alesha's own luggage, or as unaccompanied informal "mail" on Russian cross-border buses. As whole kitchens and weddings creep over the border, the material manifestations of China's postsocialist transformation thus come to pervade the most intimate spaces of Russian family life.

These rude objects have less palpable but equally significant immaterial counterparts. On overcast nights in unlit Kraskino, Hunchun illuminates the underside of clouds with an eerie orange glow visible from Alesha's parents' yard. During the wedding days Alesha spoke to contacts back in China using his Chinese SIM card by climbing a nearby hill and "catching" (*lovit'*) Chinese signal there. This electronic seepage is not entirely one way, but Chinese networks reach deeper into Russia than vice versa. I had seen further signs of the technology gap as Alesha periodically took his best friend Misha's hard drive to Hunchun to download the latest music and Hollywood films before wrapping it up and sending it back to Kraskino via the informal bus delivery service. Connection speeds are faster in Hunchun and so, even if the content is Western, the "Chinese internet" (which because of differential censorship regimes is bounded

in other ways too) is distilled into solid form and crosses the border as a materially tangible entity, a curious perversion of the unmediated connectivity that the online world supposedly affords (cf. Vonderau 2019). Measured by the indices of twenty-first-century infrastructure, therefore, the temporal divide between Kraskino and Hunchun gives the internet meaningful borders even beyond those already delineated realms of the "splinternet."[11] This again inculcates a sense that Hunchun/China are not only more "advanced" (*prodvinutyi*) and Kraskino/Russia "backward" (*otstalyi*), but that they are moving on distinct trajectories at distinct speeds: what can be streamed or downloaded in a few fluid minutes in China must make a several-hour journey by road on a magnetized hard drive to be consumed in Russia.

Yet Hunchun's China-Russia border is not the only place where colliding temporal orientations rooted in statehood, technology, and infrastructure are evident. On the Korean side of this triangular frontier of capital, technology gaps and socialist pasts also loom large. These, however, produce a different kind of haunting encounter with progresses past and present for ordinary citizens. While Beijing and Moscow have overtly espoused some version of reform since high socialism, the DPRK's departures along a new national economic path since the 1990s have been framed more subtly under the Korean Workers Party now led by Kim Jong Un. Sino-Korean contact across the river Tumen between once-socialist-progressivist states is therefore stalked by a different order of ghosts. The spectral traces of the internet—a twenty-first-century "commanding height" for the supervisory and still-Leninist CCP but a sphere of even greater strategic sensitivity in North Korea—offer an entry point for examining this.

China in the 1970s

"People ask me if they'll have Wi-Fi in North Korea," said our Chinese guide, Mr. Ma, his rasping northeastern accent rising to a new incredulous pitch as our bus sped toward the Quanhe-Wŏnjŏng border crossing. "But I say, 'they don't even have internet, how do you think you're going to have Wi-Fi?!'"

After a dawn gathering in central Hunchun, our group of thirty-nine middle-aged and elderly tourists had settled onboard and the twenty-five-year-old Ma, who ran Peony Tours with his girlfriend, was perched next to the driver prepping us for the trip. In his varifocal lenses, chinos, loafers, tan leather jacket,

and blue-and-white striped dress shirt, Ma represented a class of Han businesspeople who—despite speaking only Chinese and having largely stereotyping opinions about the neighbors—move with cosmopolitan ease throughout the triple border region. The previous day he had returned from a three-day tour to Vladivostok with a different group, some of whom had joined ours for an extended excursion. Another handful of travelers had just been to the sacred Korean/Manchu mountain Changbaishan, further testament to the concentration around Hunchun of attractions based on borderland geography.

To demonstrate his erudition, Ma's erratic introduction to North Korea was full of comparisons to both Russia and China. As we stopped at a petrol station en route he praised the merits of Russian over North Korean fuel, while conversely noting that we could expect quality transportation on the North Korean side of the border. "It's not like Russia," he said, "where the choice is between a 'broken-down vehicle' and a 'large broken-down vehicle.'"

In the field of Sino-Korean comparisons, the DPRK's Wi-Fi situation was only one misconception he wished to clear up.

"Korea is an Asian country like us," he crackled through the mic. "But their main festival isn't Spring Festival. More important for them are Victory Day and other political things associated with the leaders. The leaders are very important. So you can't say things like we do here—'Daddy Xi' [*Xi dada*], or 'Old granny Jiang' [*Jiang lao taitai*],[12] or 'Old man Mao' [*Mao laotou*]."

Other less calendar-based temporal disjunctures confronted us as we crossed the border and—reflecting the promised luxuries of DPRK tourism—boarded a comfortable Japanese-made bus. Only weeks earlier the Pyongyang government had shifted the whole country's time zone back thirty minutes to spite "wicked Japanese imperialists,"[13] but one of our new Korean guides stumbled as she worked out whether Korea and China were now thirty or ninety minutes apart.

As it turned out, none of this would matter much, since Ma—who now assumed a subordinate role to our Chinese-speaking local guides—instructed us not to adjust our watches. With mealtimes and wake-up calls calibrated accordingly, we would travel in a bubble of Beijing time throughout the trip.

More significant though than any of these low-level asynchronies was a wider temporal rift—with spectral effects—that confronted my Chinese travel companions in this erstwhile socialist brother country. Ma had hinted at some aspects of this in his description of Korean reverence for their political pantheon.

It can be hard, he noted, for Chinese people to avoid saying *Jin San Pang* ("fatty Kim the third," a Chinese nickname for Kim Jong Un) because many have forgotten their unquestioning respect for elders. Such sociopolitical shifts would be key in framing the tourists' experiences of the trip, which took us a short distance down the coast from Hunchun to the town of Rasŏn.[14]

"You may know that Rasŏn is North Korea's only special development zone [*kaifa qu*]," Ma had told us while we were still in China. "They're trying to do what we did in Shatoujiao with Reform and Opening. But it's much less successful than that." As literary critic Tong Qingbing notes in this chapter's epigraph, Russian observers too once considered emulating Shenzhen's Shatoujiao district and other experimental zones of China's early reform era.[15]

Consistent with this sense of Korean developmental inadequacy, the apparitions that haunted us in Rasŏn loomed from immediately before China's economic takeoff under Deng Xiaoping. To the tourists, the town had a pervasive atmosphere of "China in the 1970s" (*qishi niandai de Zhongguo*), a periodization embodied in our aesthetic surrounds, and in the stiff behavior of the guides and locals we encountered. Constant mutterings and some loud exclamations about how much everything reminded them of the Mao era drew on lived experiences, which—as in Kraskino/Hunchun—bespoke a longue durée sense of progress or regress embedded in socialist politics. Musings about bygone decades reflected a temporally mobile affect, not merely a view of China and North Korea as being in static positions of greater or lesser "development."

In our Rasŏn hotel my assigned roommate was Mr. Liu, a forty-something granite salesman from Anhui province and the only other solo traveler in the group. As we put our baggage down, Mr. Liu was full of bluster:

> "Look at this place," he said, gesturing at the prim but tired décor and prodding at the TV remote, which induced only a splutter and the frantic dance of Brownian motion from the screen. "North Koreans are so easily satisfied. No TV channels during the day and that road we came in on—fuck. Must be because of their Military First policy taking all the money.[16] Really, it's just like China in the 1970s . . ."

I asked Mr. Liu why he had decided to come here, and his response located his sense of Korean backwardness firmly in the frontier expansivism of contemporary Chinese development. Business, he said, was among his motivations:

> "I was thinking of looking into quarrying. All the resources are being used up in China, but North Korea still has loads unused. We would take away whole mountains if we could!"

If the DPRK represented a fossil of the Chinese past ripe for Mr. Liu's extraction, then for other tourists subsequent days around Rasŏn evoked pre-Reform China in different ways. Much of the town stands as a monument to the fitful TRADP era and the radiating Sinicization of cooperation projects since: many local financial institutions and construction firms are Chinese, and Chinese companies lease two piers at the Rasŏn port.[17] Although designed to showcase more uniquely local phenomena, the sights on our Korean-designed itinerary were no less temporally evocative than these.

Down dusty, traffic-free streets we moved between the bronze Sun Monument statues of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il overlooking the town, a concert hall performance by local school children, a fisherman's house visited by Kim Il Sung in 1954, a greenhouse cultivating the North Korean flower varieties Kimilsungia and Kimjongilia, and the Rasŏn seafood market. Many of the tourists comprised subgroups of friends in their sixties and seventies who were as eager as anyone else to observe the eerie aesthetics around us, from local men in white shirts and baggy charcoal trousers riding bicycles, to teams of middle-aged women sweeping the streets with twig brooms. Yet the discursive context of their observations revealed a deeper significance to their Sino-Korean comparisons. These friends, it turned out, owed their very relationships to political and material conditions like those we were touring. One group of eight from Jilin province had become friends when they were co-drafted to rural Yanbian as laborers during Mao Zedong's 1960s "up to the mountains, down to the countryside" (*shang shan xia xiang*) campaign. Five decades of friendship thus rested on shared experience of an era whose mass mobilizations, cult of personality, and daily hardships mirrored everything they had seen and heard of today's DPRK.

I learned the background to this group's acquaintance as we queued to leave the auditorium after the children's concert. Standing under a sign bearing the slogan "Let us Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism-ize the whole party and all of society!"[18] the group's self-nominated leader, a retired schoolteacher in a flamboyant northeastern Chinese floral dress (*bulaji*), was surprised that I knew about

"down to the countryside." I had a friend researching it, I told her, and on hearing this another group member, a former factory worker, chipped in:

> "Only you foreigners study that. In China no one wants to know. And we'll never have a museum for the Cultural Revolution."

This allusion to the regime of "public secrecy" (Hillenbrand 2020) that shrouds the Mao era was suggestive of how even a leisurely excursion among friends can have haunting effects at this juncture of (post)socialist worlds. Within China, a widespread will not to speak, or even know, about past traumas coalesces with more deliberate forgetting mechanisms like state censorship in a haunted society that "knows what not to know." "Like the ghost," Hillenbrand (2020: 37) observes, "the public secret is a thing that hovers between the visible and the occluded, the known and the unsayable. . . . Both are entities that hide in plain sight." Manifesting mimetically across the river Tumen then is the unsettling apparition of an era masked back home by radical recent change. Distorted by appearing in a different state context, the Koreanized ghosts of political excess and material struggle are not hidden in quite the same fashion as those occluded in China, but are perhaps all the more haunting for their uncanny familiarity.

Given the tourists' ages, Maoism had left a searing imprint on most of their lives. One man traveling with friends from Hulunbui'r in Inner Mongolia had been born a member of China's Russian ethnic minority (*Eluosizu*), but his family had reclassified themselves as Han to avoid persecution during the xenophobic 1960s Sino-Soviet Split. Another group had met in rural Henan, thrown together during an early-1970s agricultural campaign. For people who had not only been shaped as persons and citizens by these experiences, but were also at this very moment living out the social bonds forged during those times, North Korea's Kimist iconography and orderly austerity was uncanny. As the factory retiree noted, amid the renewed veneration of leadership and encroaching state under Xi Jinping, "China in the 1970s" did not really feel forty years past but loomed at an unknowable distance from the age of postsocialist capital.

It soon emerged that Mr. Liu himself had hardly been exempt from China's haunting twentieth-century extremes. Chatting one evening over dinner at our hotel—befitting our suspension in PRC clock time, all our meals in Korea consisted of Chinese food—his early bluster subsided as we discussed global affairs. It was unusual, he said, for him to encounter a European.

> "To be honest," he said, "my life experiences have been quite narrow. I grew up in a poor family in Wuhu, we didn't have enough money for me to go to university and so I've just had to work all my life, get married, have a child. I haven't had the freedom to choose a path for myself, even recently now I have money. And I think a lot of that is because when I was a child life wasn't that different from here in Korea [*Chaoxian*] . . ."

Liu's reflections were interrupted as our local guides stood up to perform karaoke including a sentimental rendition of the Korean folk song "Arirang" and, appropriately, some "red" Chinese classics from the Cultural Revolution era. As older members of our group retired to bed, Liu and I moved tables to join Guide Ma, who was swigging Korean Taedonggang beer out of a white porcelain soup bowl. His tongue further loosened from its already slick state, Ma was in full conspiratorial flow as he explained to me that we were all being watched more closely because I was in the group. Far from being perturbed by this, however, he seemed elated, borne away by the spooky exoticism many younger Chinese people now associate with the DPRK.

Consuming 5 percent alcohol Taedonggang at a rate better suited to 3 percent Chinese lagers was also affecting Liu's conversational style, which now veered between euphoria at this serendipitous Chinese gathering in a "socialist brother country" and rumination on his own unfortunate circumstances. His real reason for coming here, he eventually confided to me and Ma, was not to investigate granite-extraction opportunities at all, but had to do with his marital problems back home. His wife and son, he said, were in fact in Thailand at that very moment on a holiday he had been looking forward to, but had pulled out of last minute after an argument. As he descended into a slough of inebriation, Liu's initial condescension toward North Korea now echoed like a projection of his own unsettled circumstances, a personal life trajectory interrupted, and a response to memories of a Chinese upbringing by which he had always felt trapped.

Haunted by Mimesis

As we returned northward along the dramatic coastal road to Hunchun, passing the massive Japanese-built and Soviet-modernized Sŭngri Petrochemical Complex, tourist conversation on the bus combined condescending and compassionate views of what we had seen. For many, North Korea was a temporal Other that

had simply "failed" to reform its way to riches as China had. The place seemed "feudal" (*fengjian*), a term deployed constantly in the Mao era to condemn the old ways of dynastic China, but which in Chinese vernacular Marxist historiography appears to have moved forward with the times and now applies to the very Maoism that was supposed to have smashed feudalism. Perhaps the Cultural Revolution imbued "feudal" with a non-analytical meaning akin to "around forty to fifty years ago." Or perhaps imperious state socialism did not really escape feudalism after all.

As noted, the perceived difference of decades was rendered clearer to the travelers by the considerable isomorphism between the PRC and DPRK as sociopolitical entities, products of shared—or at least parallel—socialist pasts which elicited sympathy for Korea's "backwardness." More than any tourists from the Cold War "West" would have done, group members spent the ride home quizzing our guides about the specifics of Rasŏn's political and spatial economy. How was land apportioned and divided up, they wanted to know; how did the Korean *gun* and the Chinese *xian* (counties), and each state's special economic zones stack up against one another as administrative units? What were the rights of farmers over the produce from plots surrounding their houses? These visitors were not politicians, economists, or agronomists, but their own experiences of lives shaped by processes of (post)socialist structural reorganization made North Korea legible.

In response, the guides too sought common ground, discussing the role of former Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai in aiding industrial construction in the city of Hamhung, and expressing their love for classic 1950s to 1970s films known in both countries. Many aboard were evidently transported back to youths spent watching the Korean revolutionary opera *Flower Girl* (*Kkot p'anŭn ch'ŏnyŏ*), and not a few voiced a nostalgia—albeit Yurchakian nostalgia against the state—for those years. As the guides vaunted the free education and health care provided by the Korean government, tourists lamented the soaring costs and fast pace of life in today's China. Some had started to wonder whether the temporal stasis we had seen was entirely a bad thing: intact resources, quiet streets, and empty beaches might indicate a lagging DPRK economy and lack of leisure time for hard-pressed citizens, but did they also bespeak simpler lives lived at a slower clip? The travelers' consumption preferences during the trip certainly suggested that a lack of "development" carried an ecological allure. The bus was full of

bulging bags of dried sea cucumbers, herbal remedies, and tablets containing the bile of local bears, natural products being the most popular souvenir items because they were seen as cleaner and safer than their domestic equivalents. As in some of China's own borderlands, "backwardness" here was selectively reframed as purity (Tracy 2013).

One of our guides, Mr. Ri, played up to the idea that Chinese discontents with food safety scandals, inequality, and exhaustion might have something to do with ideological shifts: Chinese socialism had "characteristics" (*tese*) these days, he said wryly, and Russia had abandoned it altogether. But theirs was "pure" (*chun*) socialism. Ideas of Korean righteousness and Chinese corruption have long been part of cross-Tumen relations, and like Han literati visiting rigidly Confucian Chosŏn (1392–1897) during the Qing (1636–1911), today's tourists see something both inferior and impressive in Korean adherence to their purer if poorer past. Marrying ideology and ecology, the epithet of purity thus acts as a kind of hinge between positive and negative evaluations of North Korea's spectral society. A 2009 album by Jilin photographer Ai Yonghou itself entitled *Purity* (*chuncui/sunsu*) captures this well, its stark pastel-toned images from around the DPRK depicting empty but neat urban streets, acts of everyday kindness, and the wild landscape in which bilious bears might roam (Ai 2009).

From a Korean perspective, this purity, however austere, acquires poignant social meaning during encounters with Chinese visitors. Rowdy freewheeling tourists who must constantly be reminded to cross the road on zebra crossings, to refrain from spitting, and to talk less loudly, offer abundant evidence of the moral dissolution that accompanies capitalist reform. This is all "uncivilized" (*bu wenming*) behavior, I was told surreptitiously one evening by Mr. Ri, who—inverting the term used by Director Hong above—seemed glad of the chance to share his frustrations with a fellow-non-Chinese person. Hailing from down the coast in Chongjin, Ri regularly visited Yanji to interpret for North Korean businesspeople, and his frank evaluation of the neighbors suggested an uncoupling of notions of "civilization" and material "progress" of a kind observed elsewhere in postsocialist northeast Asia, including the Sino-Russian border (Billé 2016).

As we trundled back over the Quanhe-Wŏnjŏng bridge, the transition into China was smooth: most tourists had not even brought passports and carried passes (*tongxing zheng*) available at a day's notice for Chinese visitors to Rasŏn. But like Sino-Russian encounters, meetings across the river Tumen had seen

bidirectional temporal disjunctures emerge in the shadow of stuttering regional development projects and the expansive Chinese frontier of capital. In the final part of this chapter I bring each side of this triangular dynamic together to examine another key aspect of how this frontier operates. A focus on the economic actors who knit together this cross-border space reveals that expansivism has an earthily masculinized inflection which cuts against the apparent frictionlessness of the Chinese present inhabited by people all around Hunchun.

Bandits of the New Frontier

Hunchun's regional maps, with their straight lines and color coding, project systematic visions of radiating connectivity, yet the enactments of these impulses are grounded and more contingent. As the protagonists who propel Chinese expansion engage in penumbral male encounters with Russian regression or Korean stasis, PRC developmentalism—like processes on many contemporary frontiers of capital—itself becomes gendered. As in Anna Tsing's (2005: 39) study of jungle Kalimantan, Indonesia, where "an emergent masculinity fueled th[e] regionally spreading dynamic," scholars have observed that today's sites of wild capitalist expansion share "traditional" settler frontiers' status as arenas for rude masculinity. Be it gangsters, bandits, and despoilers barreling along logging roads telling lurid tales of violent exploits (27), or urban workers engaging in cross-border sexual consumption (Chong 2016), the primary actors are postmodern successors to the erstwhile frontiers*men* of the nineteenth-century United States (Turner [1893] 2012), other European colonies (Sinha 1995; Stoler 2010), or indeed earlier periods in Russia (Gerhard 1959) and northeast China (Lattimore 1932). As in all these cases, today's gendered Chinese expansivism emerges from activities that exceed the neat categories of regional development plans as "collaborations among legitimate and illegitimate partners" (Tsing 2005: 27)—echoing Mr. Liu's initial justification for his visit to Rasŏn—cast landscape and its inhabitants as vessels ripe for use. The Hunchun frontier's illicit masculinity and its masculinized illicitness have significant temporal implications.

The male-led spread of Chinese expansivism was evident to Alesha from the early 2000s when he took a job as a croupier in an unlicensed Kraskino casino. Chinese traders and officials would cross the border, lodge in the casino building, and pad around wearing dressing gowns with bundles of banknotes stuffed into

their waistbands. Between the Soviet collapse and the onset of stricter Putinism, lax Russian policing made it possible to operate illegal casinos for cross-border clients from China, where gambling is outlawed.[19] These rotund pajama-clad men differed in attire and physique from the archetypal frontiersman—the colonist, the prospector, or the bandit—but they were bonded to vectors of expansion as powerful as any land-hungry frontier of settlement. Less concerned with territorialized space, the new pioneers' terrain was capital, and they left a Chinese imprint not by capture of this or that peak, plain, or tract of forest but through movements of goods and finance.

The power of this Chinese vanguard to reshape economies in nearby countries has only grown since Alesha's evenings cutting cards. Like a fire moving through the forests that still cover much of the triple border region (fig. 4.1), the heat of PRC financial expansion has sparked several new pockets of frontier activity, including special zones allowing gamblers to move between countries which outlaw gambling in order to gamble. After Rasŏn in North Korea—where gambling is illegal—was designated a Special Economic Zone under TRADP in 1993, the Emperor Hotel and Casino (*Yinghuang jule jiudian*) opened here, a five-star coastal complex aimed at Chinese tourists. Similarly, around the time of Alesha's and Vika's wedding, the vast new Tigre de Cristal casino welcomed its first Chinese clients near Vladivostok (map fig. I.3). The opening ceremony for this complex, which is sited in one of four special zones exempted from a 2009 nationwide Russian gambling ban, featured a sedated Siberian tiger, drawing protest from animal rights and environmental groups.[20]

Although cloaked in acrid cigarette smoke, casinos have represented a comparatively comfortable sphere for local Russians and Koreans to participate in Chinese frontier expansion. Since the 1990s, others have engaged in more precarious activities. A prized commodity in Chinese cuisine and medicine, the far eastern sea cucumber (Rus. *trepang*; Ch. *haishen*; Kor. *haesam*) is common in the shallow coves off southern Primorye and northeast Korea, and in coastal towns like Kraskino Russian men dive with oxygen tanks and weighted belts to pluck them from the seabed two or three meters below the surface. Brought ashore, the slimy echinoderms are cleaned of sand and pebbles, stripped of their innards, and then boiled by the collector in a large vat of water, salt, and vinegar. A pungent steam seeps into the beams and rafters of the sheds where the boiling occurs, impregnating Kraskino's very fabric with the runoff of Chinese

consumption. The sea cucumbers are then dried on racks, turning black and losing mass in the process: 20 kg wet becomes 1 kg dry. It is by their dry mass that they are weighed before sale to Chinese buyers, who make periodic, if unpredictable, visits: in autumn 2015 1 kg fetched up to 7,000 yuan. Because nobody is entirely sure when the dealers will come, Kraskino sellers must simply wait in temporal suspension dictated by the fortunes and whims of those over the border.

In opportunity-less Kraskino this has been a source of considerable wealth for some men, funding extravagant home improvements. But for most, the trickle-down effects of the business have simply offered a way of eking out a living. Like bandit forestry in Kalimantan, the trade is also shrouded in layers of legal exception and bureaucratic collusion. Local waters form Russia's only maritime national park (*morskoi zapovednik*) and the *trepang* is also listed in Russia's "red book" of endangered species, creating a double prohibition against its collection. The police and coast guard are thus the first formal threat to the shallow-diving cucumber-hunters, successors to the Chinese *shenzei* ("sea cucumber bandits") who roved this part of Manchuria before it was annexed to Russia (Chapter 5). Moreover, like much illicit business in Russia, control of this sector is contested by organized crime groups, mostly gun-toting Chechen and Daghestani agents of a local politician, who sweep the coast in motorboats, threatening divers with violence, confiscating property or worse if money or catches are not surrendered. As if this were not enough, diving itself is life threatening, and stories circulate of Kraskino friends who have gone out drunk, or drowned after getting tangled up in equipment. The reliance not only of the collectors but much of the town on this hazardous business whose erratic rhythms are governed from elsewhere is thus a chilling indication of the contingent benefits of involvement with China's frontier capitalism.

From a Kraskino shrouded in penumbral legality and dim prospects, the sea cucumbers themselves follow a murky cross-border trajectory similarly expressive of frontier ambivalences. Tight local control over the Hunchun-Kraskino border crossing means that the Chinese purchasers redirect their goods via Pogranichnyi-Suifenhe (map fig. I.3), a busier crossing 300 km to the north, where better contacts and more traffic flow allow cargoes to move unscrutinized. Concealed in sacks and disguised as industrial produce or building materials, the crunchy black cylinders of organic matter and Russian marine minerals

thus perform a near complete loop, eventually reemerging on delivery to Hunchun. In doing so they follow what Tim Ingold (2007: 79–85) calls "meshworks," meandering lines of movement *along* which people or things travel, which are distinct from straighter, deliberative "networks" moved *through* by those transporting things. Here, as in the interrupted connectivity of the cross-border splinternet, the temporal rift of the border forces things that should, according to idealized portrayals of Hunchun's radiating links, be networked to follow elemental, exploratory meshes. It is therefore unsurprising that Hunchun Russians are cynically amused to notice the sea cucumbers conspicuously displayed in Chinese medicine (*zhongyao*) shops or, still more suggestively, Russian product (*Ehuo*) emporia where *haishen* gift boxes nestle alongside imported chocolate and *matreshki* nesting dolls. Selectively permeable national boundaries and the moral and legal opacities of gambling and poaching thus feed a male-led frontier dynamic.

Crisis? What Crisis?

The gendering of Chinese expansion begins in Hunchun itself, urban node for the relationships and deals that propel people, capital, and goods to Kraskino, Rasŏn, and beyond. Even out on the street, male priorities are salient as Russian-looking men are hailed by Han men advertising prostitutes in Russian. Offers of massages or, more directly, a *kunia* (girl)[21] from men passing on foot or pulling up alongside in a car, are delivered like a vendor's advertisement for his wares: "*kunia nado?*"—"need a girl?" However, it is in morally liminal nighttime entertainment spots that tighter male bonds are forged. Aside from karaoke rooms and hairdressers whose employee dress codes do not suggest haircuts, upscale venues serve as key settings for robust affirmations of frontier masculinity, connecting Chinese and Russian partners in new trade ventures.

Many of Hunchun's clubs, bars, and restaurants resemble the kind of sexualized aspirational spaces studied brilliantly by Kimberly Hoang (2015: 16) in developmental postsocialist Vietnam. From N-Bar, where men consume beer, whisky, extravagant fruit platters, and performances by scantily clad Russian women amid décor mimicking a Bavarian *Kneipe*, to Pyongyang restaurants where male diners sing karaoke alongside young North Korean women, diverse gendered spaces offer opportunities to entertain business partners or unwind after negotiations. These locations cater to different stereotyping tastes, variously

marketing extrovert, permissive Russian femininity or the demure womanhood that forms the gendered component of notional North Korean purity. In both cases, uncultured characteristics of frontier Others stand in opposition to progressive Chineseness. Yet however cosmopolitan their offerings, venues are generally Chinese-run: North Korean performance groups require official Chinese hosting partnerships to perform in Hunchun, and N-Bar (site of Alesha and Vika's first meeting) was Russian-founded but moved to Chinese ownership in the mid-2010s. Mirroring the Sinicizing shift of the GTI-TRADP transition, frontier flows propelled outward from such places are becoming more coextensively Chinese and male over time.

The importance of gendered consumption here places Hunchun firmly among a sweep of expansive frontiers for Chinese imperial formations over time. As Stevan Harrell (2001: 8–11) notes, "eroticization and feminization of the peripheral" have underpinned relations between China's Han center and some multiethnic margins for centuries, while elsewhere Inner Asian groups such as the Mongols have been hyper-masculinized (Bayar 2014). In both cases, gendered projections encode a primitivizing sense of the Other. In the post-Mao era, anthropologists working in southwest China have documented PRC minority citizens' negotiations of these relations under capitalism, as groups such as the Yao (Litzinger 2000) and Miao (Schein 2000) become feminized subjects of marketized "development." In Hunchun the fact that it is cross-border women who embody the gendered terrain of Chinese capital is not surprising in an era of transnational civilizational projects such as the GTI or Belt and Road Initiative. Being noncitizens does make these performers' situations administratively distinct from that of domestic PRC minorities, but in presenting femininity that is constructed simultaneously as exposed "voluptuous . . . unabashedly inviting" (Russians) and veiled "suggestive by virtue of its concealment" (Koreans) (Schein 2000: 123), they metonymize a whole tangle of Othernesses which emissaries of the center perceive in their trans-temporal encounters.

The feminization of frontier Others deepens as non-male members of the Chinese in-group are encompassed within male logics. Alongside Russian erotic dancers, shows at N-Bar also feature female Han performers engaging in displays of onstage toughness—including draining bottles of beer—which embody a quasi-masculinized behavior thought typical of northeastern Chinese women. Captured by the (self-)designation *dongbei nü hanzi* ("real northeastern woman"),

which modifies the male term *hanzi* ("real man") with the female morpheme *nü* to convey something closer to "female real man," many Hunchun Han women participate in the same robust ethic as their *yemen'r* ("menfolk") compatriots. Archetypal traits of hegemonic local maleness include physical height,[22] straight talking, heavy drinking, and, more ambivalently, male chauvinism. Whoever projects it then, the frontier gaze over Rasŏn and Kraskino is a male one, revealing the gendered limits to Russians' and Koreans' out-of-time participation in forging a Chinese developmental future.

Aside from its historical resonances, the masculinization of Hunchun's expansivism is notable given that China's age of post-Mao capital has been seen as coterminous with a "crisis of masculinity." As Xueping Zhong (2000: 2–12) notes, changing relationships and subjectivities amid the sociopolitical cataclysms of the reform period, exacerbated by internationalizing encounters with dominant "Western" masculinities, imperiled the "male subject position" because a lack of strong male heroes was seen to have left China vulnerable to the disasters of Maoism. The term *yin sheng yang shuai*—literally "the prosperity of the feminine and the decline of the masculine"—often denotes a broader sense of crisis over social order, but here acquired less metaphorical meaning. While other scholarship on the reform era's shifting sexual, racial, and gendered hierarchies (Rofel 2007), and projects to salvage something of the liberationist ideals of socialist modernization (Dai 2018), challenge the notion that feminism has "prospered," the post-Mao literary "search for real men" (*xunzhao nanzihan*) has continued in transmogrified form with the success of the novel *Wolf Totem* (Bulag 2010) and PRC government warnings against the "feminization" of Chinese boys (Pulford 2020a).

This raises provocative questions in Hunchun, which is precisely the kind of peripheral site where messianic males have been "sought" amidst the "primitive passion, raw sexuality, and natural instincts embodied by minority or rural men" (Wang 2013: 12). Far from urban intellectual debates around gender and development, the "people of the hills"—as 1990s official Zhao Guojun put it above—are engaged in capitalist transformations and international encounters of exactly the kind that have underlain the reconfiguration of China's gendered landscape. Unlike in Shanghai, Beijing, or futurist China's other "first-tier" locations where global ideas, goods, capital, people, and technologies flow in and out along streamlined airborne and maritime networks, in Hunchun things collide, as we

have seen, through immediate and direct frontier meshworks. China's expansive "rise" here is a cross-border rather than transnational phenomenon involving robust local men as primary actors in the very process that supposedly sparked the "crisis." Along the archetypal axes of Chinese masculinity described by Kam Louie (2002: 8), those who first theorized postsocialist progressivism under TRADP were figures who privileged refined literary (*wen*) male qualities, hence the prominence of Zhang Dejiang's calligraphy above.[23] But locally in Hunchun, post-Mao expansivism becomes an earthier martial (*wu*) endeavor, and so capitalist expansion and imperiled masculinity, rather than being coterminous, are uncoupled. Not all Kraskino- or Rasŏn-bound Chinese gamblers, officials, sea cucumber traders, construction workers, stevedores, or farmhands are men. But with a pervasive male ethic emerging from the spaces created for and by these figures in Hunchun itself, this decisively textures everyday encounters between the developmental vectors they ride and other temporal orientations.

Conclusion

This is not the first time that new Chinese histories have been written across temporal rifts with a male inflection here. The Hunchun frontier has been a stage for ethics of robust masculinity for centuries, from the mounted Manchu conquistadors who sustained Qing cosmological rule, through legendarily ferocious northeastern "bandit" blood brothers, and the multiethnic partisans who waged socialist revolution. Each of these personae has embodied martial *wu* masculinity in opposition to a feminized Other, respectively the Han Chinese, the settled population, and enemies of the revolution. Hunchun's era of cross-border high socialism also saw the PRC, USSR, and DPRK project a common image of active *wu* masculinity against an effete and dissolute capitalist West.

In describing the temporal collisions, messy masculinities, and meshwork mobilities that color the implementation of China's expansive developmental impulses around Hunchun today, I have offered a granular account of the "Rise of China" and the place of progress in cross-border encounters. The contingencies, disjunctures, and gendered textures that animate grand narratives as they play out across the frontier of capital may account for why regional projects to forge a common postsocialist future have mostly failed. Conversely, the embeddedness of progressivist visions in such grounded forms of human experience add,

as I argued in the Introduction, to the vernacular tenacity of such otherwise-abstract ideas.

The next chapter explores further the personal relationships that emerge as Chinese, Russian, and Korean people interact in this disjointed context. The encounters discussed here between everyday temporalities in an age of cross-border movement raise questions about whether individual frontierspeople consider their counterparts to be "coevals" inhabiting a common historical time (Fabian 1983). As I will show, this is an important relational concern in a context where a post-1990s release of strictures on personal mobility has not removed other socialist-era structures which influence how local people see their own and others' place in the world. As notions such as "development" and "friendship" and contours of Otherness laid down under socialism continue to figure in frontier interactions, past progress is more than just an object of ghostly nostalgia.

CHAPTER 2

Friends and Coevals

> 在这个时代，老乡这个词的涵义由地理变成了时间
>
> In this era, the term “countryman” no longer indicated geography but temporality.
>
> LIU CIXIN 刘慈欣, *The Dark Forest* 黑暗森林 (2008: 426)

Friendship in a Time of Commerce

Xiaoling, a twenty-nine-year-old shop manager from a successful Han Chinese business family, arrived in Hunchun in the early 2010s from Qiqihar in Heilongjiang province. Leveraging kin networks to get established, she soon opened a store in the compound around the Hunchun-Kraskino border crossing selling “Russian goods” (*Ehuo*), mostly Russia-themed trinkets and souvenirs. Her main clientele were Chinese tourists returning from Russia who found themselves in need of last-minute purchases, and business was good. But an underlying frustration continued to nag at her: Xiaoling wanted to move beyond trade in Russiana and actually get to know her neighbors across the border. With a father who imported Russian seafood and a sister who guided tour groups to Vladivostok and beyond, she certainly had many opportunities for contact with Russians, even if few passing through the compound showed much interest in her shop. She had even studied the language at a Hunchun training center precisely, she said, in order to make Russian friends (*Eluosi pengyou*). She was excited both at the prospect of cross-cultural communication (*jiaoliu*) for its own sake, and at the possibility that this might enable her to start a new cross-border trading business (*maimai*). Indeed, her enthusiasm for *jiaoliu* had sparked our own friendship,

since like many in Hunchun she had initially assumed me to be Russian. But her efforts to befriend actual Russians had come to naught, and those she approached responded coldly when she mentioned she was looking for a business partner. Indeed, her shop itself embodied the coterminous limits of her amical and commercial ties. In a common quirk of such emporia, all the goods on sale—*matreshka* dolls, vodka, chocolate, pleather wallets—were in fact faux-Russian items manufactured in Heilongjiang. Despite being directly on the border and trading in the frisson of international connection, this was a node of exclusively Chinese flows.

Pavel, a Russian in his early thirties, would unwittingly have passed Xiaoling's shop when he moved from his southern Primorye hometown to Hunchun in spring 2015. Bringing little more than an overnight bag—Russian borderlanders' daily possessions are mostly from China anyway—he came seeking work. Only 40 km from where he grew up, Hunchun was a place Pavel had visited often since the early 2000s, so he knew it well. He had even been employed here before in a local gym, but having spent the last few years learning Chinese he now wanted something serious. Yet unlike Xiaoling, he struggled to get set up. Weeks of frustration saw him chasing fruitlessly after local Chinese "bosses" (*laoban*) who promised employment but then let him down. Piecemeal projects included flyering for nightclubs and helping one *laoban* translate a website to help Russians use the Chinese online shopping portal Taobao. Pavel had noticed that such sites all seemed to have names beginning with strings of the letter A to appear at the top of alphabetical lists. While not a search engine optimization expert, Pavel was pretty sure this was not how the internet worked. But such assistance, he confided, was provided without payment anyway—"as a friend" (*po-druzheski*)—so far be it from him to interfere. This was just another cause for despondency that, for all his efforts and years in Hunchun, he had many Chinese acquaintances (*znakomye*) interested in "using" him for commercial gain, but no one with whom his friendship (*druzhba*) was strong enough to help him find a proper job.

"Look at us," he complained one morning. "We [Russians] have to come to them [Chinese] like supplicants [*prositeli*]. For them, Russians are just business." Having a Russian "friend," he opined, was just something Chinese people sought to instrumentalize somehow.

These two tales of frustrated friendlessness are paradigmatic of many interactions that occur across Hunchun's asynchronous frontier of capital

discussed already. After decades in the twentieth century when borders were essentially sealed—under statist temporal regimes discussed in Chapter 3—Chinese, Russian, and Korean counterparts today mix in comparatively looser conditions of cross-border market exchange. Yet the same economic and technological shifts that, largely on Chinese terms, have propelled radiating vectors of finance and trade throughout this borderland also decisively shape how these encounters unfold. Based on experiences like those of Pavel and Xiaoling, this chapter examines how relationships—and specifically friendships—are negotiated among members of different national and ethnic groups in the expansive regional "hub" that Hunchun's boosters aspire to make it. Here I engage further with issues raised in the Introduction around how contemporary lives here may differ from experiences under past socialist strictures yet remain freighted with remnants of that period. This is particularly true when it comes to the frameworks and categories through which people navigate everyday relationships. The very notion of "friendship" here shows how the socialist past continues to shape the terms of interpersonal, cross-cultural, and cross-border interaction, not only here but in wider Chinese and Russian global engagements (Schmitz 2021).

From an anthropological perspective, Xiaoling and Pavel's reflections show how Sino-Russian interactions in Hunchun (Korean sociality will feature less here) bring a familiar binary to the fore. Instrumental vs. affective qualities of relationships have been central to social scientific studies of friendship, and are alluded to by each here: Xiaoling's search for a Russian friend is driven by both social and business motives, while Pavel is suspicious of being "used" by disingenuous friends. Yet also encoded within both situations are hints at a more complex tangle of concerns, including temporal ones. However wary of exploitation, Pavel still wants a friend to get him a job, an urgent and instrumental motivation, and Xiaoling is as interested in durative, intersubjective *jiaoliu* as in business, so is not as purely utilitarian as Pavel's impressions of Chinese relationships suggest. Other relational practices are similarly blurred here, and we will see how issues from monetary exchange to atmospherics of formality and spontaneity also carry different weight in idealized bonds for Chinese and Russian counterparts. Entering into these worlds of friendship in a time of commerce ultimately leads, I suggest, to a new anthropological frame for understanding the relationship in terms of "difference" itself.

Time is pivotal here for entangled analytical and ethnographic reasons. Firstly, just as anthropologists wrestle with a heritage of having failed to see interlocutors as "coeval" historical actors (Fabian 1983), cross-border counterparts in Hunchun interact with Others they consider bearers of distinct and timeless "culture," or embodiments of their respective state's progressive trajectory. Secondly, friendship has its own temporality which varies among individual interlocutors, and over their life courses. In classic anthropological work on economic morality, Maurice Bloch (1973) proposes that all relationships be understood in relation to their "term," that is how long an imbalance in favors or other forms of exchange is tolerated among parties without spoiling the relationship. The longer the term, Bloch suggests, the greater the "morality" of the tie. Since kin are generally prepared to put up with disequilibrium over a longer period, kinship is the "longest-term" and thus most "moral" relationship. Less moral ties, including friendship, conversely have a short-termism which makes them "cheaper" to discard if transactional imbalance is too great or lasts too long (77). As I show here, the cosmopolitan entrepôt of Hunchun, pervaded by commercial exchanges and intersecting international and intercultural boundaries, is a setting for relations that span a wide gamut between long- and short-term, yet despite carrying different valences in different cultural worlds, exhibit strikingly similar patterns. To start, however, I examine why friendship is such a salient concern in today's Hunchun in the first place.

On the Frontier of Friendship

Like progress, friendship has both official and vernacular valences, distinct but entangled multi-scalar forms, which mirror the two reasons for its importance here. At the institutionalized end of the scale the fact that China, Russia, and North Korea are linked as states by socialist-style Friendship treaties makes idealization of the tie in its cross-border form common. But equally importantly, this long-standing site of migratory and multiethnic encounter provides precisely the kind of social ecology for friendship to emerge on an everyday scale, even among those with varied ideas about what this relationship entails. It is everyday reasons for friendship's prominence that I treat first.

While seeming new when compared to rigid pre-1990s state socialism, Hunchun's status as a site of cross-cultural encounter is more the historical rule than the exception. Since late-nineteenth-century arrivals here from the Korean

peninsula, northern China, and western Russia (Chapters 4 and 5), mixing among multiethnic and multilingual populations has long been a feature of life here. Indeed, even under twentieth-century socialist-bureaucratic states, in- and outward migration was frequent in the wider Hunchun-centered area, from the 1937 deportation of Korean and Chinese residents of the Soviet Far East (Khan 2009) to the 1960s arrival in Yanbian of thousands of "sent down youths" from Shanghai (Piao S. 1999). Post-1990s cross-border movements from Russia, influxes of new arrivals from across China, and Chosŏnjok mobility to and from Korea (Freeman 2011) thus continue established trends. As noted in the Introduction, the town's streetscape reflects what I call its "rooted" cosmopolitanism.

Hunchun over time thus resembles not only loci of spontaneous encounter, which sprung up globally amid postsocialist liberalization (Hann and Bellér-Hann 1998; Schwenkel 2014), but also a wider spectrum of contact zones primed for friendship. As shown by scholars adopting an ecological approach to which relationships emerge in particular contexts (Hruschka 2010: 170), rough-and-ready migratory "frontiers" make horizontal or non-kin ties such as friendship among strangers especially salient. As historian Ignacio Martínez (2019) demonstrates from the Sonoran desert edges of New Spain, today's Mexico/Arizona border, distinct patterns of friendship emerge precisely in environments where prolonged contact occurs mainly among dislocated people from different social and ethnic backgrounds. These are bonds "specifically tailored to accommodate the harsh realities of frontier life—namely, its isolation and distance from colonial centers, the constant violence and uncertainty inherent in everyday life, and the harsh climatological and ecological conditions" (12). All of these have applied to Hunchun across time, as discussed throughout this book.

The firm kinship/friendship distinction drawn in ecological studies sets such work apart from important recent anthropological projects that move beyond early functionalist paradigms and take a less classificatory approach to relations generally (Carsten 2000; M. Sahlins 2013) and friendship specifically (Desai and Killick 2013; Descharmes et al. 2011; Bell and Coleman 1999).[1] Moreover, some of the remoteness and everyday violence that once characterized the Hunchun frontier has been mitigated lately by developmental projects described already. Yet it does not require too functionalist a view to see that the disruption to preexisting networks produced by Hunchun's migrations would offer grounds for potential friendships, and as I will elaborate below, precarious

existences continue to be the norm for people of all backgrounds here today. Han communities in frontier spaces have, moreover, long experienced attenuation of lineage-based relations observed elsewhere (Stafford 2000; Pasternak 1969), and while Russians and Koreans attach varying importance to descent in their own settings, their relationships similarly become reconfigured here to privilege what Haiyan Lee (2014) calls "stranger sociality."

As in the frontier spaces studied by Martínez, and consistent with the gendered developmental patterns discussed earlier, archetypally "male" relationships, sustained by drinking, direct conversation, and competitiveness are also prominent in Hunchun, in both intra- and interethnic settings. Indeed, Sino-Russian interactions around business or commercial exchange may produce a kind of aggregate of *gemen'r* ('bro') relations and ties among *patsany* or *bratany* ('guys'/'bros'), which are prominent across northeast China and eastern Russia, respectively. In the former case, such relational modes may be open to some women (Song and Hird 2014: 185–6). But while relationships among exclusively female or male counterparts do exhibit distinct qualities in Hunchun, the patterns of individual and collective cross-border friendship I discuss here apply in a sweep of everyday interactions, not only the most gendered settings. Their frequent reproduction—regardless of participants—of the hegemonically male dynamics of Hunchun's frontier of capital offers one example of how the everyday is embedded in grander-scale affairs in this borderland. The importance of interstate relations provides another.

State Bonds

As a matter of discussion and of practice, intercultural friendship looms large in Hunchun because it is the long-standing official relationship promoted between China, Russia, and North Korea, and among the vast multiethnic populations of the PRC and former USSR. The town's contemporary commerce and mobility may be distinctly postsocialist, but Beijing, Moscow, and Pyongyang are all signatories to interstate treaties whose commitment to "Friendship" (Ch. *youyi*; Rus. *druzhba*; Kor. *chinsŏn*) has high socialist roots. Sino-Soviet, Sino-Korean, and Soviet-Korean treaties signed under Mao Zedong, Joseph Stalin, and Kim Il Sung during the 1950s to 1960s transposed an erstwhile domestic Soviet vision for "Friendship of Peoples" to the international scale. In support of this, each state engaged in a panoply of Friendship-focused sloganeering, performative

aesthetics, and construction projects, which endure to the present. Today's calendar of official events in Hunchun is packed with concerts, sports matches, school exchanges, and art festivals celebrating Sino-Russo-Korean Friendship. Socialist-era Friendship Bridges still span riverine borders between China and Russia (at Shiwei/Olochi), China and North Korea (Dandong/Sinuiju), China and Vietnam (Dongxing/Móng Cái), Uzbekistan and Afghanistan (Termez/Hairatan), and other (post)socialist locations. Consequently, and on a wider background of socialist internationalist transference in numerous fields, the key terms *youyi*, *druzhba*, and *chinsŏn* have long been translational counterparts, occupying cognate spaces in Russian, Chinese, and Korean politics, social science, and literature.

Yet at the time the Friendship Bridges were built, few people actually got to cross them, since organic interaction between populations was strictly controlled. Statist rigidity throughout the socialist world ensured that twentieth-century Friendship symposiums, exhibitions, and technical exchanges—precursors to today's events—were choreographed affairs attended only by select "delegates." Opportunities for ordinary citizens to enact official relational shibboleths such as Friendship, or indeed "cooperation" and "mutual assistance," which also appear in the titles of the 1950s to 1960s treaties (see Appendix B), were thus rare.

By contrast, today's Friendship atmospherics overlay reborn frontier conditions in which the likes of Xiaoling and Pavel engaged with *youyi*, *druzhba*, and *chinsŏn* as they seek friends (Ch. *pengyou*; Rus. *drug*; Kor. *ch'in'gu*) among cross-border counterparts. Indeed, this new era of vernacular contact is reflected in the names of the Sino-Russian (2001)[2] and Russo-Korean (2000)[3] treaties, which have replaced defunct socialist forebears in the post-Soviet era:[4] alongside friendship and cooperation, "good neighborliness" (Ch. *mulin*; Rus. *dobrososedstvo*; Kor. *sŏllin*) now appears as a tenet of interstate ties, acknowledging mutual physical borders across which meetings might occur.

Overdetermination

Hunchun is thus a site that in theory is doubly primed for friendship. Indeed, the explicit invocation of the tie in both treaties and daily life is striking, given the widely attested difficulty of finding self-defined "friendship" per se in many global societies (Beer 1998). The lack of organic Sino-Russian amity despite this thus

poses questions not only over how far vernacular relationships reflect, reject, or ignore the interstate Friendships that make them possible, but also around how parties from each group understand what "friendship" is. Decades of formal equivalence-drawing at the interstate scale of course do not mean that *youyi*, *druzhba* and *chinsŏn* all mean the same in daily life. Each has distinctive practical and semantic valences within its own Chinese, Russian, and Korean linguistic and affective field. Indeed, dictionary definitions suggest associations between *youyi* and generically "friendly" interaction (Li F. 2004: 1383), *chinsŏn* with goodwill and amicable familiarity (Uriminzokkiri 2023), and *druzhba* with greater levels of intimacy (Ozhegov 1977: 166). Yet as in other cosmopolitan ecologies, cross-border friendship is not entirely absent in Hunchun, and so frustrations like Xiaoling's and Pavel's invite us to consider when and why vernacular "translingual" (L. Liu 1995) rapprochement between *youyi* and *druzhba* occurs, and when not. In order to do this, I begin by further contextualizing how everyday encounters occur under the official aegis of postsocialist amity.

Settled Tourists

Hunched over his grubby desk, Kolia, Hunchun representative for Vladtransport, scribbles notes into a pad. His company is one of three Russian firms[5] that ferry passengers between here and southern Primorye, and on the page in front of him are columns into which, between periodic ruffling of his black hair, he enters bus registration and passenger details. Kolia's life trajectory attests both to the penetration of the USSR's multiethnic population into its remotest corners, and to the international possibilities available since the demise of that state. Born to an Armenian father and a Russian mother near the coastal settlement of Ternei (map fig. I.3), he grew up in Vladivostok ten hours' drive to the south and then made the cross-border move to Mudanjiang while still a teenager. His first plan was simply to study Chinese, which he speaks well, though reluctantly, and he did not envisage staying this long. Yet now in his late twenties, Kolia has somehow been in China for a decade, mostly working for Vladtransport in various northeastern locations.

Like others among the modest but growing number of Far Eastern Russians who sojourn as young adults in China, Kolia's time this side of the border has been the same formative blend of adventure and regret that any young man experiences. He shares Pavel's sense of having few if any Chinese friends, but

compatriot connections made in China have left a mark. The name of a long-departed Russian girlfriend met in Mudanjiang is tattooed on his arm in Chinese.

"It says 'for Darina,'" he says as I squint to make out the first character. "That's *wei*, as in *weishenme?* [*why?*]," he jokes to clarify.

The sparse walls of the dim office are stained with cigarette tar, and trails from dragged baggage streak the dusty faux marble floor. Perched high in Hunchun's 2011-built mock tsarist bus station overlooking the cavernous waiting hall, Kolia shares the room with another company representative, a Soviet naval veteran in his fifties known to Hunchun's Russians by his patronymic, Grigorevich. Usually implying respectful familiarity, this naming practice in this case rings closer to gentle mockery. These two men thus preside over the flows of human mobility that—as frequently cited in Chinese media—are key to sustaining official Sino-Russian Friendship. The everyday encounters afforded by the constant Russian presence in Hunchun ought also to offer an ideal social setting for vernacular bonds to develop.

Kolia's job—which also includes a sideline running the informal bus-based postal service used by Alesha above—is particularly important because cross-border mobility retains elements of twentieth-century strictness. No passenger trains or private vehicles (except goods lorries) are permitted to cross the border, so international travelers in either direction must ride a scheduled bus. Russians arriving in Hunchun or Chinese people going to Vladivostok travel under a Sino-Russian agreement, which allows prearranged (although often at only a day's notice) "tour groups" to hold a single group visa, much like those that take Chinese tourists to North Korea. Beneath this formal arrangement lies flexibility, however, for the forty-seven-seat Higer coaches Kolia receives and dispatches usually carry several Russian groups from different tour companies, each bringing between four and fourteen passengers. These smaller units are themselves loose agglomerations of elderly couples, small families, friends, or individuals with diverse motivations for visiting Hunchun. Thus while staying in the same hotel, these improvised "groups" subsequently subdivide, eating separately at the breakfast buffet and dispersing to pursue their own affairs during the day. Regardless of the purpose and duration of their visit—usually three to ten days—they are known as the "tourists" (*turisty*).

Most *turisty* speak no Chinese and, particularly if they are first-timers, require assistance to find what they are looking for in Hunchun. For many shoppers

this includes household goods, children's toys, glasses, clothes, car parts, home improvement products, makeup, tools, or medicines, to offer a non-exhaustive indication of the importance of China-based consumption to eastern Russian life. Although some younger Russians bridle at the constraints of the "tour" (*shoptur*, a Russian Anglicism), however loose, and make their own arrangements, most visitors receive some help from a chain of contact running through their group's Russian guide (*gid, gruppovod*), generally a non-Chinese-speaking middle-aged woman, to her network of Russian-speaking Chinese fixers and then to the relevant business. Guides often have commission arrangements with particular shops, restaurants, or, increasingly, hospitals: distinct from other northeastern border towns, Hunchun has targeted health and dentistry to attract Russian visitors in recent years, and Chinese businesspeople, mostly from Putian in distant Fujian province,[6] have opened clinics. Many Russian trips combine health care shopping and leisure tourism activities.[7]

Given the trappings of the tour, *turist* experiences in Hunchun may seem to have an impermanence and contingency ill suited to friendship. Yet while those of lesser means or from further afield (Russians come here from as far away as Komsomolsk-on-Amur, Yakutsk, or Magadan) make rarer one-off trips, repeat visits to China are a way of life for many, allowing them to develop extensive familiarity with the town and their interlocutors there. Others who would not see themselves as "living" in Hunchun still make seasonal sojourns for leisure or courses of hospital treatment, facilitated by the looser time of retirement or—more stressfully—the irregular temporality of unstable employment in Russia. For eastern Russians it is now rare never to have been to China, and significant numbers of those considered *turisty* are thus in regular, reiterative relations with Russian-speaking vendors, fixers, and others they encounter in this communicative frontier setting.

For Kolia, who belongs to a category of more settled resident Russians, neatly fitting *turisty* from differently sized groups onto the day's available coaches can be complicated, hence the notebook. And the hair-ruffling. Additional complexity emerges because passengers may (as I did several times) also travel with an individual visa (*po vize*), buying their own ticket from a special window in the bus station (200 yuan to Kraskino, 220 up the coast to Slavianka). During the summer peak in the 2010s, Kolia notes, one could see four hundred to five hundred Russians per day crossing to Hunchun, ten coaches far exceeding Chinese

numbers going the other way. But recent devaluations in the ruble relative to the yuan has meant the Russian-Chinese imbalance has inverted. This situation has left Kolia anxious over the commercial health of his employer, but it also makes for a leisurely workday. Between calculations and periodic dashes downstairs to marshal passengers, he fills his downtime by smoking or playing computer games, slurping occasionally from a plastic cup of Chinese-made whisky and Coke or, in the days after trips home, his grandmother's pear-based moonshine (*samogon'*). Around 3:00 p.m. he returns to his chaotic company-rented flat for more gaming, pirated US TV series, and heavy rock (perestroika-era group Sektor Gaza is a favorite).

Among Kolia's friends in Hunchun are Pavel and other younger members of the long-term Russian resident group, which also includes students, teachers, nightclub performers, and pensioners and families who have bought apartments. This latter phenomenon, reproduced in several locations along the Sino-Russian border, has sparked media interest on both sides in recent years, even if the figure of two hundred or so permanent residents seems small compared to that of the town overall.[8] Holding individual visas, the long-termers compare themselves favorably to the *turisty*, disapproving of their hedonistic approach to Hunchun as a leisure destination and their reputation as grasping consumers. Certain broad spatial logics also separate residents from *turisty*, whose favored hotels, shops, and hospitals lie in the western part of central Hunchun (fig. 2.1—light gray shading).[9] Longer-term Russians live more dispersed among local Han and Chosŏnjok, and more often frequent commercial outlets in an area corresponding roughly with the long-since-demolished Qing-era town walls. These ethno-spatial logics were clear whenever I left madamae's flat, which was located near the former walls: in the stairwells and yard of her housing compound I attracted quizzical stares from neighbors, but once on the street I again became an invisible "Russian."

In reality, however, it is impossible to draw clear temporary/permanent distinctions between *turisty* and residents. While the former wander Hunchun freely and visit repeatedly over periods of years, conversely even members of the latter category who have apartments or jobs must leave Hunchun frequently because of visa constraints. I return below to Russians' collective experiences of impermanence notwithstanding reiterative cross-border relationships, but first the practices and discussions of friendship that emerge under these conditions merit closer attention.

FIGURE 2.1: Central Hunchun. Hotels marked are mostly inhabited by Russians (map by author).

Friendless Frustration

Russians of all ages and backgrounds praise the advantages of life this side of the border, from safety and affordability to a vibrancy quite different from the dilapidation back home. While younger job seekers see opportunities here, the elderly have—at least during the 2000s to 2010s—been able to acquire nicer apartments and a more comfortable standard of living while continuing to draw their Russian pensions. Making new friends, however, is not widely touted as a benefit of moving to Hunchun, even as the overdetermined presence of idealized official and frontier friendship generates constant reflection on the topic on all sides.

One of the main reasons Russians cite for an absence of amity relates, as in Pavel's case, to utilitarian concerns. "The issue," I was told by Liuba, one of Hunchun's resident pensioners who appeared above, "is that Chinese people want to be friends with you in exchange for something [*za chto-to*]. So if someone is befriending you, it's clear they have something in mind. Maybe it's not necessarily monetary investment, but it won't just be a straightforward relationship."

Concerns over the possible material benefits of a relationship are, however, only part of a wider set of impediments: where Russian and Chinese counterparts diverge most is in their readiness to make friends with someone seen as categorically Other. The generalized senses of difference perceived by each side in the other—common across age groups and genders—include concerns over instrument and affect, but also encompass divergent approaches to formality vs. spontaneity, and temporality. Negotiations of these bundles of difference determine whether or not relationships work out. This was hinted at as Liuba reflected further on her encounters with apparent Chinese instrumentality:

> "Well, at the beginning it bothers you, but then later you realize that's just how it is here, it's just a difference [*prosto raznitsa takaia*]," she said, continuing: "the Chinese have a different mentality [*chuzhoi mentalitet*]."

Liuba's familiarity with Chinese friend-making patterns, as she perceived them, had seen her move from initial frustration, through understanding such practices in terms of immutable cultural difference, and finally to accepting this difference, notwithstanding its social implications: no Chinese friends. Difference thus posed a potential barrier to relationships.

Although tonally distinct, Xiaoling's above-expressed desire to make "Russian friends" was equally suggestive. More coded than Liuba's outright invocation of fundamental Otherness, this nevertheless gestured at difference as less of an impediment to Chinese friend-making: "Russian" may be more than just a modifier for "friend," but a characteristic of a kind of person whose Otherness is enfolded within feelings of friendship. But Russians on the receiving end of efforts to make them "Russian friends" have less tolerance for friendship being qualified in this categorical way.

Anthropological work from many contexts has shown that difference may indeed be either an impediment to relating (Balibar 2005) or inherent to certain forms of sociality (Stasch 2009). There is thus a need to understand ethnographically how it is constructed in specific settings, and I now treat in turn the key axes of perceived Sino-Russian difference around which friendships revolve in Hunchun, namely instrument/affect and formality/spontaneity. From examination of counterparts' ethnographies of one another in these areas, it emerges that despite considerable frontier familiarity, each side largely interacts with the other *primarily as Chinese or Russian people*, rather than as fellow-frontierspeople. As I

show, mutual Sino-Russian essentializations and exoticizations further coalesce into each side's sense that their cross-border interlocutors are bearers of timeless, distinctive cultures (Rus. *kul'tura*, Ch. *wenhua*), mentalities (*mentalitet, sixiang*), or customs (*obychai, xisu*). Within each group, practices of *youyi* and *druzhba* may involve varied approaches to difference of various kinds, but as counterparts here forge ties that pivot around reified (often socialist remnant) notions of culture, few opportunities emerge for more processual or translational patterns of relating. Exploring this revealing setting for the interpenetration of interstate and interpersonal relations, I demonstrate how temporality figures in encounters among borderlanders whose perceptions of out-of-time cultural difference make them less likely to see one another as "coeval."

Instrument/Affect

On the Hunchun frontier of capital it is unsurprising that transactional concerns and their balance with affect are important within potential friendships. Like other frontier settings, this bustling postsocialist entrepôt sees many Sino-Russian interactions unfold in trade contexts. However, since these occur as part of a wider field of reiterative contact, relational dynamics go beyond the "business friendships" that have attracted scholarly attention amid growing Chinese involvement in international economies (Kriz and Keating 2010). This is also a complex environment where Russians from a less economically buoyant location nevertheless arrive as monied consumers, something whose implications I examine below.

Business interactions are thus a prime setting for reflections on the place of transactionalism in friendship. Sergei, a forty-five-year-old Russian cross-border trader, had spent a decade in Hunchun working in export-import of the kind Xiaoling sought. "But I don't want to mix business and friendship," he said, "because then if the business deteriorates your friendship is also spoiled." Friendship was non-instrumental, Sergei explained, and he felt uncomfortable with how Chinese people seemed to take their relationship only so far before seeking material gain.

Chinese interlocutors were reciprocally sensitive to the effects of this Russian desire to separate affect from instrumentality, including in local shops, where I spent time observing interactions between Chinese owners and Russian customers. Electronics store boss Jiaxiang was one of many who hoped that his repeat interactions with clients would allow him to make "Russian friends." But mostly he was left bemoaning their mercenary shopping practices.

"Russians are obsessed with haggling [*kanjia*]," he said, describing a situation I often witnessed and adding that he thought it was "*lihai*," a term meaning "sharp" or "formidable"; *e'ren*—"extortionate"—is another common epithet. "They'll come in without saying hello, go for the lowest price, and just leave if unsatisfied." Even long-term customers, I both observed and heard, with whom relations seem well established, may simply disappear forever if something seems too expensive. Arguing mercilessly about price is seen by Russians as a legitimate pursuit in a transactional sphere ill suited to friend-making (Stern 2015). But such sentiment-free practices are jarring to Chinese counterparts, who contrast them with ideal-type exchanges involving polite inspection of items and gentler bargaining to cultivate affective bonds. Unlike for Russians, business need not exclude friendship, and indeed is better with it.

The fact that both sides thus complain of the other's utilitarianism but in different contexts—Russians when looking for pure affect, Chinese people when seeking a mix—accords with how each group's relational practices have been seen in social scientific literature. As Oleg Kharkhordin and Anna Kovaleva (2009: 58–9) note, Russian men and women of various ages are given to see real friendship as an arena of raw, spontaneous feeling generated through free emotional communication (*obshchenie*—which in fact translates as the *jiaoliu* invoked by Xiaoling above). Such intersubjective communion is, these sociologists conclude, polluted by instrumentality. Conversely, anthropological work on Chinese friendships has noted that "unquestionably deeply affective" ties may also "have decidedly instrumental features" (Strickland 2010: 103), something Xiaoling and Jiaxiang were open to. In examining how "mutual interest and benefit" and the cultivation of "feelings" (*ganqing*) are entangled in Chinese relationships, studies by Mayfair Yang (1994: 1) and others (Kipnis 1997; Ledeneva 2008) have enriched global anthropological debates over friendship, gifting, and economic morality, to which I return below. Such insights are also of further relevance here, for it is within a wider sphere of ritualistic yet affective interactions—which, as Yang notes, includes ceremonial occasions like banquets—that another bone of Sino-Russian contention arises.

Formality/Spontaneity

Matching their circumspect approach to instrumentality, Russians voice skepticism around making friends in the choreographed settings seen by Chinese

counterparts as well suited for forging ties. Ironically, these include the above-mentioned official Friendship events into which many Hunchun residents and visitors are drawn. Numerous interlocutors echoed Pavel's reflections that while it was easy enough to make Chinese acquaintances, finding real friends was almost impossible, since as "Russian friends" you are just there to be "shown off," paraded in front of other Chinese people at tedious dinners or performances.

Combining Russian objections to both transactionalism and formality, such comments were often applied to the dinners, concerts, or sports matches that give everyday texture to interstate Sino-Russo-Korean Friendship. Even when enjoying these occasions on some level, Russians set little store by them as fora for affective ties. Conversely, however, Chinese attendees valued them as chances for cultivating amity, mixing with and befriending Russians in a convivial atmosphere.

On the sidelines of a Sino-Russian Friendship variety show, a businessman in his forties named Zhihao captured this with the following ditty about Hunchun:

It's a small town, not big,	小城不大
The scenery is like a painting,	风景如画
The population is not large,	人口不多
Everyone is good at drinking.	都挺能喝.

Zhihao's association of Hunchun's pleasant atmosphere with its Friendship festivities attested to a wider sense that these were chances for developing inclusive relationships befitting this frontier town. Yet he had also observed a certain Russian reluctance to reciprocate, and when I probed him, he admitted to not having actually made many friends in such contexts. Pondering why this was, he reflected that differential approaches to (in)formality were indeed a complicating factor:

> "They're so bold and love chatting and dancing," Zhihao said, "these habits . . . it's hard to get used to the cultural divide [*wenhua chayi*]."

He felt ill matched, he said, to Russian openness (*kaifang*) and resistance to ceremony, which, despite seeing and speaking to them most days, made it difficult to discern how interested they were in being friends. The macro-level "opening" of Hunchun to the outside did not mean everyone felt equally open on the intersubjective level.

The interplay of formality and spontaneity is vital in framing different kinds of relationship elsewhere. Contrasting the joyful "play" of traditional sociality and the rule- and role-based association that emerges during football matches for the Urarina in Peru, Harry Walker (2013) argues that football sees Urarina adopt newly ascribed categories of relationship associated with statehood and individual citizenship. At formal events in Hunchun Russians are invited to enter a comparable sphere of categorical relating by inhabiting the role of "Russian friends," but they are reluctant to do so. Unlike the Urarina, who see accommodation of new "modern," taxonomical relations as desirable, Russians are immediately braced against such classificatory formality, since it clashes with their vision of idealized friendship. Not that ideals are always enacted, however.

Ideals and Practice

Daily interactions in Hunchun thus see Russians advocating friendship based on spontaneity and affect, and Chinese residents more open to combining instrument, formality, and feeling. Indeed, as an outsider to both social worlds, I did recognize each side's broad diagnoses of their troubles during my own interactions, both here and over previous years living in China and Russia. Conversations with local Chinese interlocutors, from shopkeepers to government officials, would encompass topics from global affairs to marital troubles and health. But with striking regularity discussion would turn to how our friendship would be a good basis for selling something in the Western world I was seen to embody. Indeed, Mr. Liu, my Rasŏn roommate in the previous chapter, had proposed I join him in his North Korean stone-mining enterprise. Conversely, Russian friendships entailed high expectations of affective commitment, and I found, for example, that any flaky last-minute change of plan from me would generate a larger cloud of sarcasm about being a "great friend" than I was used to. My own friend-making thus sometimes seemed to hover in the in-between, as I felt too circumspect about diving into quixotic granite export schemes for Chinese friends, and too insincere to live up to Russian standards. Here friendship as ethnographic method inevitably fed into my understanding of it as an object of study.

Constantly invoked as Hunchun people reflected on their social lives, such divergences also had curious analytical resonances for definitions of friendship. Mutual ethnographies saw Russians echoing the abovementioned historical

paradigm, which in functionalist anthropology marked friendship out as a sentimental, volitional, and mostly Euro-American bond distinct from the kinship patterns predominating in "traditional" societies. Chinese perspectives, by contrast, more closely resembled recent anthropological analyses of bonds which combine formality, instrumentality, and affect but may still be labeled friendship. Russian idealizations were no more idealizing than Chinese ones, but as different lines demarcating friendship were drawn, the fact that Russian views matched those of early anthropologists may be unsurprising if we consider that the two share a broadly "European" outlook.

Against these perspectives, my own experiences suggested that neither side's day-to-day relationships—within or between groups—hoved uniformly to these patterns, or to the ideal types documented in sociological studies of each community. As implied by Pavel above, "polluted" Russian friendships that involve business are certainly not inconceivable, and as Michael Strickland (2010) shows, Chinese bonds that deliberately exclude it are also common. But important questions remain about why idealizations play such a prominent role in Hunchun. Cross-cultural interactions see what might normally appear to be culturalist analytical views of friendship float to the surface as intimate, personal concerns: in anthropological terms, it is as though the "etic" interpretive framework of an outsider seeps into each side's internal, "emic" social practice. Distinct and firmly held ideal visions of friendship thus impede translingual rapprochement between *youyi* and *druzhba* on the frontier, and the idealization becomes the process. As a result, what really matters here is the wider bundles of perceived cultural difference within which relational elements such as instrument/affect and formality/spontaneity are embedded. Each side is in fact negotiating everyday relationships around perceptions of timeless, generalized Otherness.

The Exotic Other

The conceptions of Sino-Russian difference around which everyday friend-making pivots amount to Orientalist and Occidentalist visions whose exoticism is striking given constant mutual contact. Embedded partially in an inheritance on both sides of "vernacular" (post)socialist social science (Kruglova 2017), which determines that every "people" possesses a particular mentality and customs,

this means that identification of one's counterpart and their behavior as "Russian" or "Chinese" carries disproportionate weight in encounters that might otherwise be more heterodox. As in Mei Zhan's ethnography of Shanghai international students studying traditional Chinese medicine, each side is attuned to the generalized differences that distinguish the "other world" they encounter: while Zhan's interlocutors are skeptical of elements of Chinese medicine that seem insufficiently "Chinese" (even if they are) (Zhan 2009: 130), Chinese and Russian counterparts, despite interacting in countless day-to-day settings, channel their relationships through categorical frameworks of difference, which are held up against idealizations of friendship.

Russian evaluations of generalized Chinese difference are—as noted—sometimes guardedly positive in tone, as China is seen as an alluring destination. The small Russian tour companies whose clients Kolia has to accommodate on buses attest to this: despite having just two or three staff, many boast grandiosely evocative names—"World of Travels" (*Mir Puteshchestvii*) or "Roads of the World" (*Dorogi Mira*)—which frame the short distances between Kraskino, Slavianka, Hunchun, and other decidedly provincial locations as leaps between civilizations (fig. 2.2). Racializing negative attitudes are also present, however, and aside from condemnations of "cunning" Chinese instrumentalism, Russians who own apartments report never leasing them to Chinese tenants because "you'll never get it

FIGURE 2.2: Publicity image for Vladivostok tour company Roads of the World. Flyer handed out in Vladivostok 2015.

clean again." But with or without value judgements, attributions of Otherness to "the Chinese" or generic "Asians" are accompanied by statements echoing Liuba's recognition of "just a difference," an "alien mentality," or that "that's the culture."

Reciprocal Chinese views of the neighboring *maozi* ("hairies," an unflattering northeastern term for Russians) or *zhandou minzu* ("combative people," a label invoking purported Russian pugilism and unruliness) similarly frame direct neighbors as distant and exotic. If the Chinese are "Asian" to Russians, then Russia's essentialization as "Europe" is most evident in Hunchun's main nighttime entertainment spot, "Europe-style Street" (*Oushi jie*, map fig 2.1). Built in the mid-2000s, the street displays an intensified parade of the pseudo-tsarist architecture that is scattered across town, lurid Disneyesque buildings with turrets and cornicing abutting plaster models of Brussels landmark *Manneken Pis* atop Corinthian columns, and bars named Beerlin (*sic*) and Petersburg. Mirroring Russian tour company names, advertisements for Chinese tours to Russia blur generic "European" imagery (fig. 2.3). Chinese discussions of how many Russians live in Hunchun invert the numerical inflation of "yellow peril" discourses (Larin 1995)—although with less racializing paranoia—speaking of masses of inscrutable Others. Russians are only a small if visible proportion of the population, but talk of thousands of residents with dozens of children in local schools (my investigations revealed five at most) is ubiquitous.

Yet differences over these symmetrical projections of difference are key to friendships. Tellingly, even Russians who, unlike Liuba, see themselves as successfully befriending Chinese people nevertheless *share* her perception of immovable Chinese Otherness. Vova, introduced above, considered himself a master of friend-making and would treat me to tales which exemplified his "cultural" adaptations:

> "The Chinese never change, so you have to do what they do," he said, illustrating his point with a story about meeting a local official.
> "The man was sitting at his desk and I handed him some sweets. Then I saw in the cabinet behind him he already had the same sweets! But he still thanked me and ate mine."

This, Vova noted, showed the importance of ceremony in Chinese friendship. "But," he added, "although lots of Russians know you should do this and develop 'feelings' [he used the Chinese word *ganqing*], few bother."

FIGURE 2.3: Flyer for tours to Vladivostok depicting Russia's National History Museum in Moscow, over 6400 km away. Handed out in Hunchun streets in 2015.

Other Russians with Chinese friends similarly described the need for cultural metamorphosis or *smekalka*, a uniquely Russian flexibility in challenging situations. The proverb equivalent to "when in Rome . . ."—"do not enter another's monastery with your own charter"—appears frequently. Although describing opposite outcomes, therefore, Liuba, Vova, and others shared a view of Otherness as a potential obstacle to friendship that must always be reckoned with. Rather than new hybrid spaces between *druzhba* and *youyi* emerging, Russians uphold boundaries but may on occasion vault them into a distinct Chinese cultural realm.

Chinese transformation in the opposite direction may occur, and some I met had indeed developed a taste for the spontaneous Russian "singing and dancing" referenced by Zhihao. But more often Chinese friendships in Hunchun showed that difference need not be such a barrier and indeed—as with "Russian friends"—may be an intrinsic component of affective bonds. Ascription of the label "Russian" reflects a maintenance of explicit status positions of a kind observed in Chinese relationships elsewhere. Notwithstanding pervasive "individualization" in the post-Mao PRC (Y. Yan 2009), relationship-making has been shown to involve reproduction of categorical ties such as "classmate," "colleague," or "fellow-villager" rather than of a unitary subject (Smart 1999). As Xiaowei Zang (2003: 65) notes in comparing Han Chinese and Hui Muslim relationships, the former often make friends around "status blocks or cultural boundaries" while still valuing individual choice. Even relational dyads like Chinese/Russian, which imply status differentiation, still encode a balance of reciprocal *ganqing*. Degrees of familiarity or expected commitment of course differ between peers (e.g., classmate/classmate) and non-peers (guest/host), but in Hunchun friendship with a foreigner whose foreignness is integral to the friendship—as between guest and host—need not be a qualitatively different, affect-free tie from a Chinese perspective.

To Russians, however, minimizing difference—such as that represented by formality or transactionalism—has been seen as key for *druzhba* (Kharkhordin and Kovaleva 2009: 74–5), achieved through abovementioned *obshchenie,* which overcomes boundaries as "everyone's personhood [is] dialogized to produce a common intersubjective sociality" (Yurchak 2006: 148).[10] Russians therefore balk at being "Russian friends" precisely because the term encodes a category distinction incompatible with intersubjective communion. Thus even as—or rather

partly because—Chinese entreaties to make friends are translated into Russian at formal, temporally constrained Friendship events, little vernacular mediation with *youyi* occurs and processual approaches are thwarted in their infancy.

Otherworldliness

While my concern here is not with deterministic origin seeking, these patterns might be seen as explicable given wider traits of the two "worlds" (*per* the bus companies or Zhan above) that converge in Hunchun. For one thing, and despite decades of projects to forge each old empire into a commensurate state with a place in world history, Chinese and Russian societies are institutionalized to differing extents. Russian friendship based on trust and dissolved difference may befit an informalized environment whose "legal culture grounded in fear and disrespect" and "formless" political and moral arrangements (Ledeneva 2006: 111–113) lack the relationship-anchoring mechanisms that in Chinese societies, however distended on frontiers, are provided by governments, lineages, and other institutions.

Mutual contact may also help us understand China's and Russia's places within important anthropological debates over reciprocity, economic morality, and the place of the sacred. Divergent approaches to instrumentality and formality within friendship is only one index of wider disparities between the roles played by material and financial concerns, and comfortableness with ceremony, in each social world. Money is discussed, gifted, or otherwise overtly present in many Chinese settings that Russians consider the sole preserve of sentiment, from conversations about how much things cost or what people earn to more ritual environments. At one funeral for a Russian community member during fieldwork, I was struck by a prominent placard near the mortuary entrance whose matter-of-fact transactionalism would have horrified the Russian mourners had they been able to read it. With infinitesimal specificity, the roster listed treatment charges for the specifically Chinese purpose of beautifying a corpse for the afterlife: these varied, "depending on the level of damage or decomposition," from basic stitching and makeup to measures for "rotten or dismembered bodies" (500–700 yuan), "victims of traffic accidents or violent deaths" (500–700 yuan), and, most drastically, bodies suffering from infectious diseases (1,000 yuan). However graphic, this illustrated well the non-euphemized presence of monetary matters in Chinese spheres where Russians privilege feeling.

Encounters in Hunchun therefore appear to bring together one group that works to separate "pure" gifts from commodities (Gregory 1982; Laidlaw 2000), and correspondingly sacred unconditional relationships from transactional economic ones, and another group whose reciprocity is rooted in an elaborate—if no less sacred—register of entangled material and emotional exchange. As Yunxiang Yan has noted, even in postsocialist northeast China, whose "Confucian" and kin-based socialities have diminished amid political and social upheaval, informal relationship making—for example seeking "back doors" into new social networks—still involves a blend of ethical and instrumental concerns (Yan 2003: 39–40).

Thus while Hunchun offers each side ample chances to observe the other's relative interest in material exchange, formality, emotion, and spontaneity, actually making cross-border friendships and thereby shifting the parameters of the sacred within *youyi* and *druzhba* proves difficult. The two terms may be anchored in treaties as translationally equivalent, but everyday Sino-Russian interactions in shops or at Friendship events still stumble over contours of differentiation—among trade partners, notional hosts/guests, or cultural Others—all broadly coextensive with the interstate border. This is significant for our understanding of where temporality figures as the unruly flows of the frontier of Chinese capitalism wash across linear state boundaries.

Contours of Difference on the Postsocialist Frontier

The complications posed to friendship by generalized Chinese/Russian difference in part reflect the effectiveness of state-socialist regimes and their twentieth-century proclivities for differentiation. Visions of static "cultures" and cross-border status divisions held in Hunchun today reproduce the logics of top-down projects that inscribed ethnic and national categories, and marshaled people into historical communities and geographical spaces where statehood, culture, and historical agency were to be coextensive. The everyday endurances of such projects have been documented in numerous settings where cross-border and transnational relationships were shaped by the Cold War and its aftermath (Zhou 2019; Applebaum 2019; Urbansky 2020).

But as already observed, the broader Hunchun area does not always live up to the ideals of rationalized bordered space projected by socialist or postsocialist

state architects. As a social, economic, and political environment with many archetypal capitalist "frontier" qualities, this is also a site of encounter for Chinese, Russian, and Korean people who resemble other frontierspeople across time, not only in the rude masculinization of Chinese development but also in each group's remarkably symmetrical position of socioeconomic precarity. From closer examination of the everyday symmetries and statist asymmetries of Sino-Russian life, a nuanced and temporally inflected appreciation of why friendship falters in Hunchun becomes possible.

Writing of seventeenth- to eighteenth-century New Spain, Ignacio Martínez (2019: 7–8) observes another context in which a multiethnic population simultaneously negotiates both codified state-sanctioned Friendships and vernacular, situational varieties of the tie: while the Spanish colonial authorities promote a progressive-Enlightenment vision of civilized bonds among an emergent elite of *gente de razón* (people of reason), more "pragmatic," "strategic" relational modes are deployed day-to-day by "colonial subjects (mostly Indians) and agents of empire (mostly Spanish and mestizos)." Drawing on the work of Ann Stoler (2010), Martínez shows how, while the Spanish colonial elite seek to exert control by regulating subjects' emotions in line with "civilizational" standards, the latter work in the opposite direction, carving out space within an imbalanced power structure and shaping politics on the ground. This ultimately proceeds to the point where a distinctive, multiethnic civil society emerges, and so in everyday life in colonial Sonora, official Friendship does help foster conditions in which everyday friendships form, even if not in quite the way that the authorities intend. Unlike genteelly "reasonable" ties, vernacular friendships were in the end "sincere and authentic when they had to be and cunningly malleable when the circumstances demanded it" (Martínez 2019: 20–21). But they emerged nonetheless.

Significant differences evidently exist between the geo-historical and technological contexts of Spain's Sonoran Empire and Hunchun's twenty-first-century frontier of capital, from infrastructure to the presence of linear international borders. New expressways and high-speed trains are only the latest projects to reduce Hunchun's rugged remoteness. But grounds for comparison emerge from demographics, progressive "development" efforts, and the fact that the multiethnic peoples converging in both settings comprise a frontier mix of hard-pressed individuals, opportunists, and agents of state power.

In the Hunchun case this applies not only in the town itself but also across the wider capitalist frontier of Russian sea cucumber poachers and North Korean tour guides. Also in both places, political centers promote an idealized order of valorized Friendship which, wedded to the state's progressivist visions, purports to offer a model for day-to-day ties. Each also presents a situation in which salient—and not mutually exclusive—relationships at both scales reflect a cataclysmic change of historical epoch, whether from pre-colonial to colonial or socialist to postsocialist.

It is here, however, that parallels between the two reach their limits. In New Spain, preexisting vernacular arrangements coexist with a new order of officially promoted bonds, while in Hunchun the trajectory is broadly reversed: everyday contact reflects a postsocialist era of developmental expansion, but formal cross-border Friendship, and the firm borders across which it is celebrated, are largely artifacts of an earlier socialist period. It is in these shifts in historicity that we may seek answers for why Martínez's case offers conditions amenable to friendship-based civil society, while in Hunchun the possibility of collaborative mediation between *youyi* and *druzhba* remains largely unrealized. As I will show, Hunchun's peculiar combination of frontier and postsocialist conditions paradoxically entrenches friendship-inhibiting lines of differentiation among groups despite their mutual familiarity, and indeed mutual reliance.

Symmetrical Estrangement

Like frontierspeople across geographies and histories, and regardless of their length of stay, Russians in Hunchun feel like *priezzhie*—"entrants" or "outsiders"—living lives colored by contingency. This in turn more starkly inscribes perceived lines of difference between themselves and the Chinese and Korean Hunchun people they see as "locals." Perhaps less surprising among short-termers, given their linguistic limitations and reliance on intermediaries, a sense of separateness is also common among longer-term residents, more of whom speak Chinese and live autonomously, and is if anything more pronounced given its constant reinforcement. Younger job seekers such as Pavel and pensioners like Liuba face comparable administrative vulnerabilities, which have worsened over time. In past years apartment buyers could obtain easily renewable annual visas based on property ownership, which necessitated leaving China once every 180 days. But for reasons unclear to all affected, since early 2015

tourist visas with departures every 90 days have been the only option, doubling the bureaucratic inconvenience. Many were also completely shut out of China when state borders closed to noncitizens with the 2020 outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In non-pandemic times, most with jobs in Hunchun work for individual traders, small enterprises, schools, or bars, none of which have the status to sponsor a long-term residency permit because PRC migration policies favor white-collar foreign "talents" (Bork-Hüffer and Yuan-Ihle 2014). No one therefore enjoys anything other than "tourist" legal status. While crackdowns on visa irregularities have, at least until recently, been rarer in the Russian borderlands than elsewhere in China, this is a remarkable situation given how long many residents stay and their efforts to distinguish themselves from the *turisty*. Departures for visa renewal may not be more irksome than Russia's own byzantine bureaucracy, but nevertheless reinforce the sense of being *priezzhie*.

Precarious lives back in dilapidated post-Soviet parts of the frontier do not help either. In the frank assessment of Mikhail, a staff member at Hunchun's government office for assisting foreigners, cross-border migrants represent the "middle class and below," hence their search for affordable products and housing.

"Do you know how people differ from bees?" Mikhail asked me one day over a Saturday fish buffet.

"Marx?" I asked, taking a moment to grasp the allusion to classic social(ist) theory, something relatively common in daily Russian and Chinese conversation.[11]

"Yes. Like Marx said, man makes plans—bees do not make plans, they just fly around," continued Mikhail. "But I'll tell you from experience, not everyone is capable of making plans. Simple people come here. They have little money, maybe their health is poor. They don't necessarily think, 'I'm giving up on Russia, I'm moving to China forever.'"

Russian residents old and young bluntly describe arriving in Hunchun with little: *goloi zhopoi*, "with a naked arse" is one common phrase. Life may be materially more comfortable here than in decaying small-town Primorye, but new precarities arise as many feel like tolerated guests, reliant on modest means, vulnerable to shifting visa regulations, and possibly owing their health to local doctors.

Yet Russians' assumed "hosts" are usually no more settled. Most Chinese vendors or service workers in the town occupy contingent positions as

wailairen—the precise outsider/entrant translation of Russian *priezzhie*, but a term that, like *youyi/druzhba,* remains untranslated and thus equivocally siloed off from its equivalent. A common category of person across China in an era of breakneck urbanization, *wailairen* in Hunchun comprise a turbulent cohort of Han migrants from northeastern industrial hubs which, like Xiaoling's hometown Qiqihar, have been economically blighted since post-Mao reforms ended guaranteed employment, housing, and other benefits (see Introduction). Joined by itinerant traders from other Russian border locations, and those following old routes from Shandong, most thus hail from considerably farther away than Slavianka or Kraskino, undertaking migrations that are as much a product of the postsocialist age as Russian border-crossings are.

Domestic migrants may encounter fewer bureaucratic hurdles than their Russian counterparts, but differential urban/rural household registrations mean that moving to Hunchun (officially a "city" as discussed in Chapter 1) poses villagers administrative complications. Seeking comfortable lives just as their Russian counterparts do, these arrivals speak humbly of wanting to *zhengqian*, an expression for "earning money" that entails laboring day by day to save up, as opposed to *zhuanqian*, making money from capital accumulation. Russian custom is pivotal to this. Among Russians the commonplace that "Hunchun is built on our money" reflects a certain awareness of the situation, and while massive government investment in the town's buildings, roads, and railway make such claims misdirected on the macro level, many Chinese residents do indeed base livelihoods on Russian patronage. *Priezzhie* and *wailairen* are thus to a significant extent in mutual frontier dependency.

In both China and Russia separately, comparable precarities have been shown to foster close interpersonal bonds among those experiencing them. Discussing trade in the contemporary Russian Far East, Tobias Holzlehner observes that weak formal mechanisms for regulating economic interaction encourage intimate relationships as a source of security: "low levels of systemic trust," Holzlehner (2018: 75) notes, "tend to facilitate alternative, trust-based personal solutions." Further back in time but equally pertinent, classic anthropological studies by Maurice Freedman (1966: 13) and James and Rubie Watson (2004: 66–7) observe that frontier Chinese communities seek to include geographically nearby Others into preexisting solidary groups, extending interpersonal bonds to mitigate deficiencies in lineage or state institutionalization.

Yet the Sino-Russian demographic symmetry that might encourage translational friendships is obscured to all parties in Hunchun as other features of the postsocialist frontier reinforce the gap between worlds. Unlike in these comparative cases—or Martínez's New Spain—the groups that encounter one another here are riven by a linear state border that reinforces the mutually perceived sense of friendship-inhibiting timeless difference elaborated above. Inscribed decisively under taxonomical socialism and running parallel to the divide among perceived cultural Others, the border's effects persist even when Russian and Chinese counterparts stand face-to-face in Hunchun. On the frontier of capital, mutually dependent buyers and vendors are separated into distinct national economic spheres. Trade deals or shop exchanges occur, ultimately, in different currencies, since rubles must be exchanged for yuan, exposing transactional counterparts to distant and ungovernable economic developments. This was illustrated during fieldwork when a fall in global oil prices, as well as international pressure around Moscow's 2014 invasion of Ukraine, led to a drastic ruble devaluation. Over 7000 km away from Crimea, prices suddenly doubled for Russians, whose resolve to get a bargain thus heightened. This in turn increased their suspicions of being ripped off by (apparently) disingenuously "friendly" Chinese vendors, who conversely confronted customers seeming more insensitively instrumental than ever.

Intimate Antagonists

These mutual dependencies and structural antagonisms among Chinese shopkeepers and Russian clients, or indeed *laoban* and their "supplicants," are redolent of what Clifford Geertz calls the "bazaar economy." Studying vendor-client interactions in Sefrou, Morocco, Geertz (1978: 30–2) shows how parties to a transaction become "familiar" or even "intimate antagonists" in symmetrical, reiterative arrangements that make them "at once coupled and opposed," mutually reliant but at odds in their goals (buying cheap/selling dear). Like bazaaris, Hunchun counterparts are familiar, repeat partners occupying symmetrical socioeconomic positions. The oil price cataclysm was only the latest event to expose status-divided intimate antagonisms: Chinese vendors often observed that Russians had been spending less over the years as China's expanding economy drove an appreciating yuan and local price increases. Growing cross-border economic literacy and market familiarity had also made Russians more discerning, harder

bargainers. Longer-term *wailairen* residents reminisced about a harmonious golden age when cross-border shopping trips began in the 2000s:

> "Nobody knew what things should cost, so we made a fortune," a Han translator and fixer told me one day in his shop. "They also didn't know how to haggle."

Haggling is viewed ambivalently among Russians themselves, for while many enjoy boasting of their judicious eye for quality and value, when discussing the practice in the abstract, the appealingly Geertz-echoing term *bazarit'* ("to haggle") can sound condescending, as though describing undignified behavior proper to "Asian" people. Indeed—having entered Russian from Persian via Central Asian Turkic languages—the word also means "to argue/make noise" and generally create scandal. Haggling offers a paradoxical example of how non-translation between worlds results in near misses in personal rapprochement. Russians who are familiar with entangled Chinese economic and social practices may dimly perceive that some back-and-forth around price is often part of the Chinese shopping experience. Yet their own blunt bargaining efforts generally remain removed from the performative coaxing expected in Chinese *ganqing*-cultivating exchanges. Several entangled but mutually opaque value regimes are in operation on the frontier.

Developments from Russian haggling to the ruble crash have yoked precarious vendors and shoppers still more intimately, reducing Russian border crossings (pre-2020) from the peak of five hundred mentioned by Kolia to a maximum of around one hundred per day since 2015. On less frequent trips, Russians spend less, in turn increasing Chinese migrant turnover as reduced custom makes people shut up shop and leave Hunchun to try their luck elsewhere. Those remaining are bound tighter than ever to Russian trade, and less inclined to give friendship a chance: instrumental and affective proportions of relationship making after all fluctuate depending on economic circumstance (Kipnis 1997: 12–14). Intimacy breeds antagonism among exchange participants' divergent goals, and the divergent practices used to achieve them. In relation to the first aspect of time and friendship mentioned above, timeless differences perceived symmetrically but posing different problems to each side are thus more deeply inscribed than ever by border effects.

Before turning in the final part of this chapter to the second temporal dimension of failed frontier friendships, it is worth noting an irony that underscores the everyday workings of the interstate border: precisely as face-to-face Sino-Russian contact diminished and became more antagonistic in Hunchun during 2015, gaudy celebrations of official Sino-Russian Friendship were witnessing a remarkable uptick. With Eurasian geopolitics shifting, Moscow's diplomatic estrangement over Ukraine saw it seeking firmer relations with Beijing. This trend has continued since and suits both sides: with Western leaders absent, Presidents Putin and Xi were VIP guests at each other's 2015 WWII seventieth anniversary parades, and in June 2018 Xi awarded Putin the Friendship Medal—the PRC's highest international honor. In early February 2022 at the opening of the XXIV Winter Olympics in Beijing, Xi and Putin met for a thirty-eighth time since 2013; with the border near Hunchun still completely sealed, a joint communiqué declared each party's commitment to a "Friendship without limits" (Pulford 2022). Although cloaked by pandemic border closure, Moscow's reinvasion of Ukraine three weeks later and subsequent Western sanctions made Chinese businesses still more circumspect about dealing with Russia, even as two new China-Russia bridges opened in 2022 across the river Amur. These official theatrics, daubed in aesthetics redolent of the high-socialist Friendships that preceded them, draw attention to diminishing organic friendship on the frontier, and thereby to the distinctive temporal and historical context in which each valence of relationship is lodged.

The Time of Friendship

This returns us to Bloch's conception of the interface between the "term" of relationships and their "moral" meaning: as we have seen, people's relative tolerance for transactional imbalances are core features of relational life in Hunchun. Yet Chinese and Russian counterparts approach various forms of exchange within relationships differently. Such differences, along with the encompassing senses of Otherness of which they are part, may be smoothed out in some settings, but here the dynamics of the capitalist frontier and effects of the state border combine to ensure relations remain sufficiently "cheap" to both sides to be quickly discarded. The sense of cheapness may itself not be symmetrical: after all it is

often Russian rather than Chinese discomfort with entering into "friendships" wherein a Russian/Chinese, guest/host, or vendor/client status difference is part of the tie that prevents moral, long-term relationships from developing. But the exacerbated antagonisms of shifting cross-border economics and politics have nevertheless reduced the "term" over which precarious counterparts are prepared to tolerate imbalance of any kind. Friendship therefore falters, even for the pragmatic purpose of making frontier life less contingent.

If this helps us understand granular temporal dimensions of Sino-Russian (non-)friendship, the prominence of transactional concerns here also demonstrates the importance of Hunchun's postsocialist time of capital as macro-scale context. In both China and Russia, "cheap," short-term relationships are seen by local interlocutors and scholars alike to be a blight of the era after high socialism. Holzlehner may note above some close Russian bonds emerging amid institutional breakdown, but more typical are reflections like Aleksandr's above that "every man for himself" is now the rule. Writing of social ills troubling post-Soviet Russia at large, Oleg Kharkhordin (2009: 12) observes that a lack of close friendships constitutes a significant "contemporary concern" (*sovremennaia zabota*), and suggests that friendship should be promoted as a "social resource" for improving society. This parallels views widely held among my Chinese friends that today's rampantly consumerist China is an emotionally cold (*lengmo*) social environment. Chinese intellectuals too have long been preoccupied with a crisis of friendship in the PRC, with philosopher Yang Shi (1993: 38) advocating equal, affective friendships to counter social breakdown in the money-obsessed post-Mao era. As literary scholar Haiyan Lee (2014: 2–3) writes, the contemporary PRC's particular postsocialist combination of individualized capitalism and authoritarian governance has generated a sense of "moral decay" in which "everyone is a potential menace to everyone else."

The next chapter focuses in detail on temporalities of friendship under high socialism, and particularly the formal PRC-USSR-DPRK bond which embraced Hunchun from the 1950s. But given Chinese and Russian views of today's commercial age as one of diminished friendship, we might also ask here what might have been different about relationships under high socialism. In the Soviet case, anthropological work has shown that a multiethnic population of mutual familiars, all notional participants in an official Soviet "Friendship of Peoples" (*Druzhba narodov*), found that formalized, difference-inscribing Friendship like that

rejected by Russians in Hunchun today acquired emotional significance in daily life. Festivals, concerts, contests, and formal exhibitions which required that "all Soviet nationalities be deeply moved by the art of other Soviet nationalities" (Slezkine 1994: 447) were *de rigueur*, yet as ethnologist Svetlana Lourié (2011: 145) observes, diverse interlocutors saw *Druzhba narodov* as a "mode of interethnic self-organization" and found "human warmth" in shared events. Caroline Humphrey (2004: 146) similarly notes that "real warmth flourished" precisely when:

> After the parades, people partied all night, usually in a totally multi-ethnic ambiance. Audiences enjoyed the cultural achievements of other nationalities. . . . Of course, in everyday life, a great deal of comradeship also rested on a sense of shared hardship, common fears, and on the grey sameness of material life. But the socialist values of responsibility and duty towards others were real.

As Humphrey suggests here, everyday Soviet friendship was not solely a matter of official messaging. Indeed, it was as people waged struggles imposed by the socialist shortage economy—as much a state product as Friendship of Peoples, albeit a less intentional one—that cherished friendships arose from common lives of bureaucratic tedium and material grayness. Interpersonal bonds were a means of acquiring scarce goods (Abrahams 1999), a "refuge" from the hostile public domain (Shlapentokh 1984), where the socialist "seller's market" meant "the seller [was] unfriendly and impolite with the buyer, while the buyer trie[d] to flatter the seller" (Kornai 1992: 248). Warm relationships based on conspiring to navigate economic challenges had an instrumentality that Russians might today shun, whether in social interactions in their own country or in China. But lines of division among parties to these transactional friendships were not as obviously aligned with other contours of differentiation, such as those produced in Russia today by the gaping inequalities and shifting favor of a predatory state, or the separation induced by mass westward migration, which has depopulated the Russian Far East since the 1990s (see Conclusion). Whether in their formal co-participation in the grand project of socialist construction or in everyday endeavors, Soviet citizens often shared similar goals, and not unlike on the frontiers of New Spain, sometimes became friends by enacting a vernacular counterpart to an officially promoted virtue, in this case socialist "cooperation."

Some of these observations about common struggles having once brought people together apply to China's high socialist past too. If I have suggested here that Hunchun's Chinese friendships have a greater tolerance for status differentiation than Russian ones, even these have limits when people are pitted against one another in the contemporary PRC's cutthroat economy. For all its devastating campaigns and internecine strife, the less wealthy but more equal Mao era is seen as a time of greater interpersonal harmony. As in the USSR, China's diverse population—ethnically categorized under a Soviet-influenced system—has been exhorted to forge the kind of "traditional friendship" (*chuantong youyi*) that is officially ascribed to Chosŏnjok and Han in Hunchun. While friendship and Chinese politics have long had an uneasy coexistence given the former's seditious egalitarianism against traditional preference for hierarchy (Kutcher 2000: 1616), the revolutionary 1940s saw Han Communist cadres seek ritual friendships (Ch. *jiebai*, Mon. *anda*) with neighboring Mongols (Bulag 2010: 115–117). But if intergroup friendships have emerged, it has as likely been because of shared experiences, whether banal or harrowing, of PRC subjectivity. Mao-era relations between, for example, Uyghurs and Han in Xinjiang are recalled by some of the former group as better than today's, a fact I heard attributed (when living for a spell in Urumqi) to common material hardships, which forced everyone to work together. In today's era of Xinjiang "terror capitalism" (Byler 2022) by contrast, Uyghur-Han relations are more often poisoned by the racializing settler/native differentials imposed by an expansionist state.

Soviet *Druzhba narodov* and its Chinese equivalent thus make for productive points of comparison not only to distinct Sino-Russian presents but also to today's official state-state Friendship and the importance—as I have argued—of difference within it. As I presently move on to show, the contemporary interstate relationship and historical intrastate ones are closely linked in local history and memory, yet it is significant that—despite having many classificatory proclivities—*Druzhba narodov* overlaid a situation in which its stated aims were less obviously counteracted by structural antagonisms than Sino-Russian Friendship. Material differences between Soviet groups, and a sense that some people were moving at different speeds along the thread of progress, were less stark than those between regressive Kraskino and futurist Hunchun today. Among a Soviet population cross-cut in multiple ways, organic differences of "culture" or variations in approach to instrument/affect or formality/spontaneity

among nationalities were also less liable to be exacerbated by economic or political shifts at the state scale. Ties could be "longer-term" because people did not suddenly have to undertake visa runs. This made relationships less consistently fractious along categorical lines resembling the Russian/Chinese division repeatedly inscribed in postsocialist Hunchun, and relational translation across difference became more viable among citizens who were not oppositionally "yoked" like today's frontier and cross-border counterparts.

Conclusion

After several weeks of chasing *laobans*, Pavel eventually found work with a Russian import/export firm, which hired him despite the economic downturn and his need for regular visa renewal. Pavel's amical and business relations, mirroring Xiaoling's, therefore ended up tracing the contours of his Russianness. By exploring Sino-Russian encounters on Hunchun's frontier of capital, this chapter has offered an account of how experiences like Pavel's and Xiaoling's occur, as formal Friendship celebrated between states rarely finds full vernacular expression.

As a site of collision among friendship practices that approach difference differently, the Hunchun setting offers grounds for elevating consideration of Otherness as a pivotal concern in social scientific studies of friendship more generally. Equally, the combined operation of frontier and postsocialist dynamics here provide a sense of the temporal effects wrought on relations across borders by the ends and beginnings of historical epochs, which has comparative potential across (post)socialist and (post)colonial contexts. Tentative parallels drawn in the above suggest that migratory, multiethnic frontier friendship in Hunchun is distinct from relationships emerging as early-modern settler societies took shape, unfolding as it does in the wake of forceful socialist-modernist projects which inscribed borders, attributed timeless "cultures" to historic national and subnational groups, and elevated Friendship as the preeminent boundary-spanning bond among them.

Chinese readiness to forge friendships across contours of difference running parallel to interstate borders may suggest that one constituency in Hunchun has greater access than the other to a mode of affective everyday relating which is compatible with the categorical interstate relationship. Indeed, since the early

days of China's socialist revolution when Chinese proletarians were exhorted to develop "class *ganqing*" with foreign counterparts (Kipnis 1997: 161–2), it has at times seemed that a Chinese cultural backdrop is better suited to the taxonomania and Friendship aesthetics of Soviet-style state socialism than the Russian one from which it emerged. Making one final comparison, it is also notable that ties which are comfortable with difference and blend affect, utility, and formality resemble a kind of "bond friendship" observed in classical anthropological work. Writing from Tikopia in the 1930s, Raymond Firth ([1936] 1967: 114) notes:

> Strangers are frequently taken as bond-friends. This is done partly from the tradition of caring for the welfare of visitors, partly from the wish to share any property that the strangers may have brought, and very largely from the desire to become their social impresario, to be clothed in the novelty of their presence, to have first claim upon news which they have of other lands and remarkable phenomena.

If in Hunchun a mode of relating resembling this collides with another which exhibits minimal tolerance for foreign "novelty" within relationships, in the next chapter I explore how it was that reified "remarkable phenomena" came to be traits that Chinese, Soviet/Russian, and Korean populations were exhorted to show off to one another under high socialism. Performances of cultural difference were a core tenet of socialist Friendship, and constitutive of each state's categorical commitment to teleological modern time. Yet for all its rigidities, progressive Friendship too resembled ritual bonds in ways which revealed that the time of high modernity, like postmodernity, had its own vernacular textures.

PART II

HISTORY

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CHAPTER 3

Socialism in Several Countries

> He noticed that in the first stack of Lenin's books there was a sheet of paper saying that Lenin was born in the *gengwu* Year of the Horse to an ordinary working-class family. . . . He noticed that the paper from the thirty-fifth stack said that in the *dingsi* Year of the Serpent, the Soviet Union's October Revolution succeeded and the forty-seven-year-old Lenin became the general secretary of the Soviet Union's Communist Party;
> . . .
> in the *jiazi* Year of the Rat, which is to say in the thirteenth Year of the Republic, Lenin passed away from illness, and Stalin became the general secretary of the Soviet Union's Communist Party.
>
> YAN LIANKE, *Lenin's Kisses* (translated by Carolos Rojas) (2012: 221)

Not Just Sport

The May 2015 opening of Hunchun's Sambo Club was a grand occasion, held in the gymnasium of a Korean-language middle school north of the town center. On approach to the imposing curly-eaved building, banners suspended from red balloons shaped like Chinese lanterns declared that the opening would "Deepen Sino-Russian Friendship" (*shenhua ZhongE youyi*). As at many such Hunchun events involving Chinese, Russian, and Korean participants, Friendship was the guiding motif throughout.

As a sport-focused institution, the school already offered various martial arts, but the new facilities for sambo, a Soviet-origin form of close-quarters combat, introduced a fresh international frisson. Correspondingly, the event

was attended by a delegation—all male—of local *duma* (parliament) members from the nearby Russian town of Ussuriisk, muscly male representatives of the World Sambo Federation, and Russian and Chinese TV news crews. Alongside several dozen school pupils and members of Hunchun's local People's Congress (*renda*), we looked on as the raucous opening ceremony got underway.

Perhaps incongruous to anyone unaccustomed to the performative semiotics of (post)socialist friendship, this began with a ballroom dance display by two Russian students from Yanbian University in nearby Yanji. They were followed by another pair nervously singing the 1975 song "Victory Day" ("*Den' pobedy*") by Soviet *estrada* performer Lev Leshchenko. This being 2015, a watershed year in official efforts to yoke together the temporalities and moralities of Russian/Soviet and Chinese World War II experiences, the jaunty song was appropriate, however unintelligible to Chinese and Korean attendees.

After these introductory entertainments, officials from each side took to the stage to make speeches, interspersed by deafening blasts of marching music from the PA. The Hunchun representatives took turns eulogizing the town's recent expansion and future plans, and the importance of relations with Russia to these. From the Russian side, one Ussuriisk deputy solemnly declared his hope for "economic and friendly [*druzhestvennye*] ties" and a "mutually neighborly [*vzaimososedskaia*] twenty-first-century friendship" with Hunchun and China at large. Indeed, the multilingual banner behind the stage encouraged us to elevate our perspective to the international scale, announcing the venue as "Hunchun, China."

On the hall floor, some Russian teenagers from a club over the border demonstrated sambo techniques, accompanied by rapper Sasha Belyi's thumping hit "Sambo Is Not Just Sport" ("*Sambo eto ne prosto sport*"). All delegates then moved to inspect the new facilities upstairs. The sambo room boasted a shiny padded floor (which I had helped Russian friends lay in the preceding days), and—again internationalizing this local event—the walls were adorned with Russian and Chinese flags and a mounted photo of presidents Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping shaking hands. The TV news crews crowded round to interview the Sambo Federation delegates against this backdrop.

The event culminated as the politicians changed from suits into shorts and T-shirts (the Chinese plain blue, the Russians' branded with a sport-promotion campaign backed by Putin's United Russia party) for a friendly table tennis

game. A few of the matchups became competitive, but most remained leisurely, likely less a result of organic amity between the sides than of the participants' physiques: despite recent anti-corruption campaigns in both China and Russia, neither team's players showed much corporeal sign of reining in extravagant official lifestyles. Limited stamina therefore shortened games. The ping-pong diplomacy over, participants shook hands for a few photos and boarded minibuses to an activity they were more accustomed to: a joint dinner with further chances for masculine bonding and raucous toasts to Sino-Russian Friendship.

With its atmosphere of spectacle and competitiveness, the sambo opening resembled many popular events in today's Hunchun, which promote a particular vision of cross-border relations. Whether among China and Russia, or between both states and Korea, big-F "Friendship" has for decades defined interstate relations at this triple border. The same goes for a broader global sweep of relationships among (post)socialist states.

Building on my above account of how vernacular cross-border friendships in the age of frontier capital pivot around timeless "difference," this chapter explores the temporalities of interstate Friendship, particularly under mid-twentieth-century high socialism, when this relationship became established. As I will show, in contrast to the disjunctures that exacerbate senses of difference around Hunchun today, socialist Friendship was concerned primarily with guaranteeing rigid cross-border synchrony. Yet temporal alignment did not entail similarity in all areas. State socialism rested as a sociopolitical project on an elaborate order of modernist taxonomies, categories brought into being by polities working to produce what Timothy Mitchell (1999: 77) calls the "state effect" whereby "mundane material practices . . . take on the appearance of an abstract nonmaterial form." Establishing synchrony therefore relied precisely on delineating certain kinds of categorical difference among parties to the relationship. Beyond being a generically positive human bond mapped onto states, therefore, Friendship encoded seemingly countervailing principles of robust separateness and firm connectedness among its participants.

The scene above demonstrates how some of these dynamics remain important today, despite the demise of state socialism's temporal order. The performatively adversarial Sino-Russian ping-pong game, where parliamentarians faced off as metonymic representatives of their respective states, was part of this. Less

intuitively, so too were the ballroom dancing and patriotic singing, for their culturalist displays of Russian(/Soviet)-ness to a mostly Chinese audience reflected the importance of staged difference to sustaining interstate Friendship. Sambo combined both these vectors. Originally developed as a self-defense technique for the Soviet People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD—precursor to the KGB) and Red Army, the martial art at once embodied the robust oppositional ties that interstate Friends enter into, and served as a performatively gendered representation of Russia as a cultural entity.

Spectacles in which counterparts demonstrate their reified distinctiveness to one another underline the power of their choice, despite being so different, to be Friends. They also reveal much about socialist states' place within an avowedly "modern" classificatory scheme which endows each political and national entity with a performable "culture." Linear borders are therefore crucial to interstate Friendship, since participants must be kept discrete. This, I will suggest, is no coincidence, since the whole idea of states engaging in human-style friendship emerged precisely in a post-Enlightenment Europe where polities and people were alike coming to be understood as bounded, individualized agents. Equally significantly, the same taxonomical thinking that spawned sovereign polities and individual persons framed nations as discrete subjects of historical time. Interstate Friendship has thus been as concerned with guaranteeing states' temporal coexistence as with their interface in territorial space. This is especially so among political projects that have formally embarked on a shared Marxist-materialist historical trajectory toward communism.

My account of cross-border Friendship's temporalizing dimensions thus employs contemporary events like the above as a window onto longer-standing PRC-USSR-DPRK affairs. Based on Hunchun-rooted ethnographic history, I first demonstrate how each state's bounded progressive status from the 1940s to the 1960s demanded a new Friendship-anchored temporal order. Coterminous taxonomies made statehood, progress, friendship, and borders co-constitutive, and joint adherence to a single forwardist timescale permitted both temporal and spatial tessellation among polities. Showing how this unfolded and was represented to ordinary people around Hunchun offers a new borderland perspective on the routinizing and classificatory modes of governance, which scholars have shown were key not only to early-PRC politics (Ghosh 2020), but also in late-imperial and Republican (Lam 2011) China.

Occasions such as the sambo opening were, as the song implied, about much more than sport.

In line with this book's overarching concern with unruly textures embedded in linear progressivism, this perspective demonstrates how socialist Friendship, progress, and thus statehood itself were more culturally freighted than their taxonomical aesthetics suggested. Material mundanities, which, per Mitchell, state power was meant to abstract, in fact remained intact and were inherent to the project. Toward the chapter's end, I draw on these observations to offer a new anthropological framing of state-state friendships in general. But I begin with the high ebb of international socialist Friendship around Hunchun, using local media to explore the entangled principles of progress, boundedness, and amity, which have framed and united many polities.

Socialism in Several Countries

In Hunchun in 1958, the main local newspaper *Yanbian Daily*, a key source here,[1] added a Chinese edition—*Yanbian ribao*—to its decade-old Korean format *Yŏnbyŏn ilbo*. This new version, in a language known patchily in Yanbian at the time, reflected a harnessing of local news to a nationwide progressive agenda at the onset of the Great Leap Forward (1958–61). Two years previously Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong had presaged the Leap's industrial and agricultural drives by declaring that "given fifty or sixty years we certainly ought to surpass the United States."[2] This commitment to both forward movement and international competition, a desire to "Overtake Britain and Catch Up with America" (*chao Ying gan Mei*), would reverberate around the Leap's—ultimately disastrous—productivity campaigns, including in the pages of the newspaper. Friendship and cross-border progress would undergird China's advancement on the world stage, and Hunchun's place within it.

Printed in black and white with splashes of red on special occasions, around half *Yanbian ribao*'s 1950s to 1960s articles were national reports syndicated from Xinhua News Agency or CCP mouthpiece *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao*). But locally focused items forcefully demonstrated how statewide socialist temporality was penetrating even to the remote northeastern borderlands. Over the period of the Leap, rural production achievements, from filling Hunchun's grain stores to meeting mechanization quotas, were vaunted like the feats of a rampant

army. "Agriculture has been weaponized, Agriculture has advanced [*cujin*]," one full-page article from January 1960 declared. At Hunchun's Liangshui People's Commune (*Liangshui renmin gongshe*), readers learned, the new accelerationism was propelling production "from small to large, from simple to complex, from local to global."[3]

Hunchun was thus swept up in a headlong departure from the "backward" Chinese past (Anagnost 1997), and a march into a new arena of redefined temporal categories and international relations. The terms I have translated above as "local" and "global"—*tu* (lit. "earth") and *yang* (lit. "ocean")—reflect how progress had earlier become associated with maritime foreignness during China's collisions with Western European imperialism (Pulford 2016). But under Mao, socialist China was reorienting this temporal relationship with capitalist former colonists, refusing the country's retrograde position under Enlightenment regimes of time, race, ethnicity, and "nation," which foreign empires had propelled worldwide since the seventeenth century. With intensified force from the industrialized 1800s, European imperial historicism rested on taxonomies that cast societies as discrete units along a linear progressivist scale, elevating "advanced" colonial metropoles and "consign[ing] Indians, Africans, and other 'rude' nations to an imaginary waiting room of history" (Chakrabarty 2000: 8). This both justified "civilizing" projects among newly "discovered" peoples and shaped social scientific practice in (post)colonies (Fabian 1983). Postcolonial societies were, as Partha Chatterjee (1993) observes, thus left having to fight to have their constructed "differentness" recognized as a referent for a historically agentive "nation."

As Chapter 4 shows, this fight for time sovereignty unfolded in earthy ways around Hunchun, but at the abstracted level state socialism represented a means of reversing temporal oppression by fighting taxonomical fire with fire. The definition and application of new social "facts" had, as Tong Lam (2011: 2) shows, already been an important "cultural and political practice" undergirding the emergence of Chinese nationhood in the country's Republican period (1912–1949). Yet under state socialism, whose taxonomania was more ambitious than Guomindang nationalism, Euro-Enlightenment modernity, or indeed any grand project focused on "the production and protection of social categories and social kinds" (Stoler and McGranahan 2007: 7), the reification of peoples and polities within bounds of categorical difference attained unprecedented intensity.

New states deployed Marxian material evolutionism to flip global temporality in opposition to European or—relevant to Hunchun—Japanese imperialism. Interventionist social "sculpting," as Adeeb Khalid (2007: 125) argues of the USSR, exceeded anything a classical "empire" had been capable of, and temporal progress became so important that space itself "became time" as capitalism, and thus "the West," embodied a retrograde past away from which socialist countries were advancing (Volland 2017: 9; cf. Buck-Morss 2002: 36–37). Even if the Cold War era was hardly free of Euro-American hegemonism, reporting in *Yanbian ribao* showed that Hunchun now fell within a new order where Chinese people were developing their own *yang*-style capacities.

Progress Across Borders

Beyond China's colonial experience and rivalry with the capitalist "camp," however, temporality was also vital to relations *among* socialist states. Of particular relevance in a borderland setting like Hunchun, this meant being part of the same progressive story as the Soviet Union, which was the progenitor of much of China's new socialist classificatory order. Indeed, Mao's own Great Leap language itself reflected the Soviet color of PRC progressivism, echoing earlier commitments by Nikita Khrushchev to "catch up with and overtake" (*dognat' i peregnat'*) capitalist rivals. But at ground level too, Leap-era achievements were harnessed to vectors of Soviet-led advancement, even when this entailed a conceptual stretch. In winter 1958–59 Hunchun embarked on a drive to collect manure for fertilizer and, strikingly, effusive *Yanbian ribao* stories about this loamy campaign sat alongside coverage of the first Soviet moon probe *Luna I*, launched in January 1959. Resembling cosmic fever elsewhere in China at the time,[4] terrestrial toil was directly yoked to celestial adventure for, as the paper reported,[5] Hunchun's Hongqi People's Commune was inspired that month to lead a "manure-collecting sputnik day movement" to emulate *Luna*'s success.

Notwithstanding its Khrushchevian resonances, Mao's emphasis on rural "leaping" late during the 1950s bloom of Sino-Soviet Friendship differed from the statelier aesthetics of Soviet industrial progressivism (Schmalzer 2016). While showing how Marxian stage-by-stage progress was presented to a local audience, therefore, the tethering of Hunchun's earthy agenda to Soviet cosmic exploits reveals the paradoxes of a project undertaken by states committed to shared socialist advancement but disunited by being at different technological stages,

and proceeding at different speeds. Each state, moreover, adhered to abovementioned modernist taxonomies, which mostly separated rather than united. This was particularly true of the Leninist-Stalinist-Maoist-Kimist socialisms, which, via looping Eurasian trajectories, took root in the cross-border space around Hunchun from the 1950s to the 1960s.

The utopian internationalism of doctrinaire Marxism may have envisioned the dissolution of distinctions between peoples and polities, an ideal that lingered in the thought of Soviet intellectuals such as historical and ethnological eclecticist Lev Gumilev (Bassin 2016: 5). But Stalinist statism's dominant impulse was in the opposite direction, embedding progress in strict regimes of boundary drawing. The non-materialization of global revolution following the 1917 October Revolution had, via Lenin's revised views on the role of the state in revolution, presaged Stalin and Bukharin's 1924 articulation of "Socialism in One Country" (*sotsializm v otdel'no vziatoi strane*), which recast socialism as a project carried out up to a single state's borders. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Stalinism acquired ever-more statist trappings, reaching its patriotic apotheosis during World War II. It was therefore this brand of Socialism in One Country, promoting a "sedentary," territorialized, sovereign modernity (Bauman in Konishi 2013: 12) rather than borderless Marxist internationalism, that was inherited in the PRC (Kaple 1994) and DPRK (Lankov 2007). Indeed, the abovementioned anti-colonial impulse at the heart of Chinese—and Korean—socialist causes meant that there were strong local reasons for emphasizing territorial sovereignty and borders within progressive projects in these places too. "Catching up" was as national as it was ideological, crucial to avoid being left "without history" (Wolf 1982) in a world of discrete states. Borders and progress were thus co-constitutive.

This paradoxical situation left open the question of how to connect cognate socialist projects across borders, including around Hunchun. Progressive temporality rested—in each of the Soviet, Chinese, and Korean cases—as much on bounded state-ness as on adherence to Marxist historicism, but vestigial internationalism and a pragmatic need for allies demanded such connections. Post-Stalin interstate Friendship was the means to make them. Borders were thus integral to the forging of a bond defined by the preexisting separateness of nations, which would march forward together. At Hunchun's triple border, this raised some intriguing issues, for as well as being the only place (except pliant Mongolia) where the USSR's largest territorial unit, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist

Republic, directly bordered non-Soviet states, the Sino-Soviet-Korean nexus also ran directly through each polity's local origin story. Borders now trisected the terrain of Bolshevik, Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and Korean Workers Party (KWP) revolutionary campaigns, which were spatially and conceptually entangled. Friendship may thus have brought cross-border Histories into revolutionary "simultaneity" (Kracauer 1969), but as we will see, substantial temporal work would be needed to make sense of the idea of progressing together separately.

Fractal Friendships

Like Socialism in One Country, the idea of Friendship as bond of socialist simultaneity had a Soviet domestic inheritance (and a pre-Soviet one discussed later). From December 1935, "Friendship of Peoples" (*Druzhba narodov*) became the official metaphor describing relations among the USSR's domestic "nationalities" (*national'nosti*), replacing earlier "Brotherhood of Peoples" (Martin 2001: 270). Parties to this Friendship were the multiethnic inhabitants of the former Russian Empire, a polity that Lenin ([1914] 1964: 102) had condemned as a "prison of peoples" (*tiurma narodov*), and like its international counterpart, the bond rested on new identifications of national groups as bounded units. The framework for initially categorizing Soviet citizens was devised by Stalin, the CPSU's People's Commissar for Nationalities 1917–23, and drew on nineteenth-century ethno-racial and evolutionist paradigms to decree that a "nation's" existence was predicated on shared "language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture" (Stalin [1913] 1936: 8). This repertoire of traits formally entitled a group to national self-determination, promises of which had enhanced Bolshevik popularity during the Russian Civil War (1917–22). In practice, official treatment of the USSR's diversely delineated population varied over time (Slezkine 1994), acquiring many trappings of tsarist imprisonment under late Stalinism. But the idea of discrete groups forging a common Soviet History through Friendship, celebrated in Stalin and post-Stalin versions of the Soviet national anthem,[6] street names, a Moscow university, and other settings, remained consistent.

With Soviet tutelage guiding the PRC's transition to one-country socialism, the CCP borrowed much of this paradigm for classifying its own diverse post-imperial populace from the 1950s. The regime, which to this day categorizes fifty-six Chinese "nationalities" (*minzu*), was not based exclusively on Stalinist

precedent (Mullaney 2010: 12), but the model exerted tremendous influence, and some groups—including the Uyghurs (Brophy 2016)—themselves engaged directly with Soviet ethnology.[7] Relations between *minzu* were thenceforth described in terms echoing *Yanbian ribao*, which celebrated the "friendship as deep as the sea" (*youyi si hai shen*) among local Han and Chosŏnjok in their futureward march toward communism.[8]

Since delineating subnational ethnic groups and drawing borders around states were cognate operations carried out on different scales, international socialist relationships also soon came to be officially termed Friendships. Mere months after the 1949 establishment of the PRC, Mao and Stalin signed a Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance[9] when the former visited Moscow in February 1950. Five years later, the alliance between the USSR and the seven European "Warsaw Pact" states was instantiated by a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance,[10] whose Russian title—testifying to socialist modernity's predilection for standardization—differed by only one word from its Sino-Soviet antecedent. Following both the USSR and PRC's contributions to the Korean War (1950–53), each state also concluded analogous Friendship treaties with North Korea in 1961.[11]

For Hunchun and its surrounds, Friendship was thus a fractal bond linking progressive, bounded participants both within and among socialist polities. In time these scaled relationships would come into conflict as local Koreans negotiated overlapping subnational and transnational identities, a dangerous combination during the xenophobic Cultural Revolution (1966–76). But for socialist China's first decade, the PRC, USSR, and DPRK were severally bounded as socialist states, while Chosŏnjok, Han, and Manchu citizens of China, and Ukrainian, Russian, Korean, Chinese, and indigenous Soviet citizens nearby were each framed as tessellating subnational agents of progressive History. The mostly monoethnic DPRK,[12] whose very existence rested on the contribution of three million Chinese "volunteers"—including many Hunchun residents—in the Korean War, was enfolded into international Friendship wholesale.

As *Yanbian ribao* readers learned during the 1950s and 1960s, socialist Friendship rested on twin principles of separateness and unity like those evident at the sambo event decades later. Articles covering China's new global orientation were embellished with graphics of the Kremlin's Spasskaia Tower beaming out revolution like an antenna (fig. 3.1), and emphasized socialist states'

FIGURE 3.1: “The Great Soviet Union” graphic, *Yanbian ribao* January 25, 1959.

independence, voluntarism, and egalitarianism to show that the progressive world’s strength lay in its inclusion of many discrete historical subjects. China’s burgeoning bonds with the USSR and Eastern European “brother countries” (*xiongdi guojia*)—I revisit use of kinship terms below—were extolled in wordy headlines like “The brother countries universally rally together to congratulate our country on the tenth anniversary of its foundation: The friendship [*youyi*] and unity [*tuanjie*] of each socialist country is growing day by day [*yu ri juzeng*].” Articles on occasions like the PRC founding’s anniversary conveyed congratulations from residents of Warsaw, Budapest, Tirana, Sofia, and Pyongyang,[13] signs of a new synchronized celebratory calendar. Individual international bonds

were also praised, with headlines such as "Sino-East German Friendship Is as Deep as the Sea [*youyi qingshen si hai*]"[14] deploying the same formulation as that describing Han-Chosŏnjok ties above.

These paeans to Friendship reproduced an emphasis on free will and parity which was key to the wider socialist international lexicon. The text of the 1950 Sino-Soviet treaty specifically stressed equality (Rus. *ravnopravie*, Ch. *pingdeng*) (Heinzig 2015: 348), while the "People's Volunteer Army" (*Renmin zhiyuan jun*) label applied to China's Korean War forces (in fact mostly regular troops) reflected the centrality of volition to cross-border ties. This was all the more notable since everyday life under Friendship involved a distinct lack of voluntarism: Hunchun's border pass regime (see Introduction), madamae recalls, generated a decidedly strict (*yan*) atmosphere, and freedom of movement both within and across borders was constrained.

In the 1950s to 1960s, the Hunchun area was thus a space whose politics and history were crosscut by ambivalent dynamics of distinction and unity. The USSR, PRC, and DPRK were discrete progressive polities, but all were now bound within a single "camp" by voluntary ties "as deep as the sea." The newly circumscribed Chinese, Russian, and Korean "peoples" (Ch. *renmin*; Rus. *narod*; Kor. *inmin*) had little choice over entering this indivisible relationship. Moreover, just as modern time had been foisted on many places via European imperialism, bordered Friendship's arrival here owed much to Soviet superiority as the most "advanced" socialist state. I now consider this cluster of paradoxes, and specifically how the work that went into representing and sustaining international Friendship made sense of them. As I will show, formal representations of the bond further attest to its temporalizing qualities, but also reveal that—for all its linear abstraction—socialist progressivism was pervaded by contingency. Indeed, Friendship's unruly vernacular morality ultimately lent cultural texture to the very socialist time that it sustained, a fact which in turn allows for an anthropological reappraisal of the entire notion of interstate amity, and what happens when it fails.

Cultural Isomorphism

Socialist Friendship required that all participants tessellate within a single temporal frame, one projected in both directions through linear time with

compatible pasts as important as the futureward march toward shared utopia. For a state to claim a place within this bidirectional scheme it had to demonstrate both boundedness and endowment with appropriate "national" properties legible on one plane. This need was met by the elaborate range of semantics, symbols, aesthetics, and canonized "culture" that suffused high socialist media and education, academia, and politics, bringing Friendship and progress into the lives of ordinary people and leaving a mark still evident in Hunchun. Documenting this is key to demonstrating the importance of temporal tessellation, for as Felix Ringel notes, tendencies among anthropologists to see "temporality" everywhere often overlook how the fabric of time is woven, and make assumptions about causation and change that obscure the indeterminacy of any given present for those living it. "Since rhythms can be disturbed . . . and social relations dissolved," Ringel (2016: 393) counsels, "it is the work that goes into upholding certain temporal orders, structures, rhythms and endurances that should catch our attention."

In remote parts of China, Russia, and Korea, choreographed performances had heralded the very first arrivals of new socialist time, as opera, ballet, and other theatrical and musical forms communicated revolution to rural areas.[15] A 1934 Stalinist code had also determined that the artistic output of Soviet nationalities combine surface-level cultural traits ("national in form") with suitable ideological messaging ("socialist in content") (Frolova-Walker 1998). But under socialism in several countries, a wider array of performances was transposed to the state scale, casting a sweeping canvas of socialist ambition over international historical space, and undertaking exactly the kind of "work" stressed by Ringel.

Unity of Form

In May 1965 *Yanbian ribao* reported on the "friendly visit" (*youhao fangwen*) of a song and dance troupe from the DPRK's neighboring North Hamgyŏng Province. Watched by twelve hundred spectators in Yanji's Workers Culture Palace, their show bore considerable ceremonial and political load. The eighty-member troupe was met off its bus with gifts of flowers by Yanbian's prefectural secretary, four prefectural deputy heads, the mayor of Yanji, his deputy, and other leaders. At an after-show dinner for the "Korean friends" (*Chaoxian youren*), one Yanbian dignitary and the troupe's leader expressed shared wishes "that the

unbreakable [*laobukepo*], brotherly, combat-born Sino-Korean friendship [*youyi*] would strengthen and develop forever." In the spirit of exchange and permanent union, Yanbian's own Theatrical Troupe then performed the revolutionary play *Great Wall of the South Sea* (*Nanhai Changcheng*) for the guests, a story of PRC Mainlanders defending against Guomindang naval attacks. Little comment was passed in *Yanbian ribao* on the content of the Korean performance.[16]

Animating Friendship at ground level, such interactions served as both form and content for new cross-border pre-histories and futures. Temporal tessellation was, like much of socialist statecraft at home and abroad, highly formalistic, and Stalinist artistic modes shared—and mimetically transferred—between participants a canonized set of politically admissible manifestations of interstate or interethnic alterity. From revolutionary opera to jaunty singing or indeed ballroom dancing, this isomorphic repertoire confirmed modern states as the sole legitimate vessels and historical voices for Soviet/Russian, Chinese, and Korean cultures. Such tendencies are not unique to socialism. As Saurabh Dube (2004: 2) notes in reflections on the culturalism of the 2000 Sydney Olympics opening ceremony, joint performances by indigenous Australians and recent migrants showed how "the body of culture came to dwell in dress and dance, its heart to reside in color and costume, and its soul to inhere in myth and music, all enacted under the sign of the state." In pre-socialist Korea and northeast China, Japanese imperial rule had seen constructed "ethnic" traits promoted as depoliticized forms of "local color" (Kor. *chibang saek*), "representing the diversity of the empire under colonialism" (Kim 2020: 95). But here as elsewhere, state socialism intensified and internationalized these modern practices. Canonical performance thus instantiated an entire order of communism-bound peoples, cultures, and nations whose inscribed alterity was bridged by Friendship. Each party's politically inoculated (and thus paradoxically highly politicized) repertoire of traits demonstrated the commensurability of all and, as in Clifford Geertz's (1980: 123–124) Balinese *negara* theater state, expressed the system itself as "a representation of how reality was arranged."

Performances of this reality extended beyond Hunchun's borderland song and dances, for as *Yanbian ribao* readers learned, similar ceremonials were afoot throughout the socialist world. In October 1959 an exhibition of paintings by PRC artists opened in Hanoi with works appearing under the realist rubrics "beautiful landscapes," "economic construction," "culture and education," "lives of the

people," and "international friendship." Headlined "Strengthen Sino-Vietnamese Friendly Communication [*youyi jiaoliu*] and Construction Experience," the report on the event hardly discussed the art itself, paying closer attention to the officials in attendance, including local Chinese Embassy staff and representatives of the Sino-Vietnamese Friendship Organization—an entity with Sino-Soviet-Korean analogues (Frolov 2007; Y. Li 2018).[17]

Local film listings in *Yanbian ribao* further attested to cross-border socialist Friendship's thick cultural weft. Screening in autumn 1959 at Yanji Cinema,[18] then Yanbian's only official movie theatre, was one Soviet film, *Andzhelika* (*Andelieyika*); one North Korean release, *Her Road* (*Ta de daolu*); and two domestic productions—*The Young Person in Our Village* (*Women cunli de nianqing ren*) and Opium War drama *Lin Zexu*. Both former titles were dubbed into Chinese at Changchun Film Studio, an institution with Japanese colonial roots (Wilson 1987: 31), which became the early PRC's cinematic hub a few hours to Hunchun's northwest. Of the thirty-seven works translated there in 1959, nineteen were Soviet, six East German, three North Korean, two Hungarian, and one each from Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other "brother countries."

This elaborate cross-border traffic in song, dance, art, and film, reflecting what Nicolai Volland (2017: 3) calls the "worldliness" of Mao-era Chinese culture, demonstrated the complex top-down work of forging Sino-Soviet-Korean Friendship among commensurate historical entities. This went deeper than the mere circulation of these productions, for—adhering to the Stalinist dictums referenced above—early PRC culture crafted shared socialist time in both form and content. Use of Soviet-derived artistic techniques in films shown in Yanbian throughout the 1950s and 1960s re-narrated China's own recent past to fit new revolutionary sequencing, beginning with *Southern Conquest and Northern War* (*Nan Zheng Bei Zhan*, 1952), the PRC's first Civil War–focused feature, and continuing with works such as *Reconnaissance across the Yangtze* (*Dujiang zhencha ji*, 1954), covering a campaign to suppress Guomindang "bandits," and *Story of a Scar* (*Shangba de gushi*, 1958), a family tale set during the Great Leap Forward. These projects to make shared linear time a social fact around Hunchun were certainly not without their ambivalences, as we shall see. But their ambition had as much force as any state-socialist schemes to reshape the "natural" order, showing that upholding linear temporality required as much maintenance work as the inscription of linear spatial borders. Temporal elaboration ultimately

sclerotized to the point where "progress" itself ceased to be a trajectory and became a permanent state of being, but before discussing this I demonstrate the ceremonial, linguistic, and historiographical techniques that were also key to cross-border synchronization.

Temporal Tessellation

Anthropologists studying diverse cultural understandings of time have distinguished between two modes in which temporality is experienced. The first of these, understood as practical, non-human, ecological, or environmental time, has classically been seen as running in the background of the second, variously termed social, human, structural, or ideological time (Bear 2014: 15–16). Thus as Alfred Gell (1998: 10–15) notes, environmental rhythms that determine activities such as sowing and harvesting crops are overlaid by "human" frameworks including calendrical events like festivals and anniversaries.

Hunchun's mid-twentieth-century calendar was a carousel of waypoints in human-crafted ideological time, as socialist staples from the October Revolution and May Day to Lenin's birth and death were marked locally each year.[19] Anniversaries of "Red October" were front-page news in *Yanbian ribao*, with 1959 coverage featuring a friendly picture of Mao and Khrushchev and describing celebrations both in Beijing and in Yanji Workers Culture Palace. Attended by hundreds of people "of every ethnic group and class," the latter occasion was—like the sambo event—festooned with Soviet and PRC flags and a banner reading "Long live the great and unbreakable Friendship between the Chinese and Soviet peoples!" Chu Tŏkhae/Zhu Dehai, Chosŏnjok First Secretary of the Yanbian Party Committee and Head of the prefectural Sino-Soviet Friendship Society, gave a speech lauding Soviet socialism's global beacon of progress, Soviet assistance to China, and the PRC's own People's Communes. Cultural displays enlivened such occasions, and following Chu's remarks was a showing of the 1958 Soviet war film *Thunder over the Fields* (Ch. *Tianye shang de xueyu*, Rus. *Groza nad poliami*), which dramatizes the establishment of Soviet power in Ukraine.[20]

Cyclical celebrations of a Friendship embracing thousands of miles of socialist space were widespread in 1950s to 1960s China, for as Yan Li (2018: 39) notes, festivities nationwide would mark the February 14 signing of the 1950 Friendship Treaty, the founding of the Soviet Red Army (February 23), Lenin's birthday

(April 22), the October Revolution (November 7), and Stalin's birthday (December 21). Rhythmically performing Friendship in other ways, Chinese children adopted the Soviet tradition of annual summer camps (64). If there was a Soviet-centrism to much of this synchrony,[21] *Yanbian ribao* also covered a wider cycle of events including anniversaries of the Vietnamese Workers Party (January 7), the Laos People's Liberation Army (January 20), Ho Chi Minh's birthday (May 20), and other occasions from eastern Europe, Cuba, and North Korea.[22] "Worldliness" thus characterized a broad sweep of socialist temporal experience in the remote northeast.

In his abovementioned discussion of anthropology's social/natural time paradigm, Gell argues that in fact the distinction does not really hold up. Even in the "classic" pastoral studies from which the division emerged, he notes, "social" rituals such as harvest festivals hinge on "natural" agricultural cycles, blurring practical and cosmological spheres and, arguably, lending "natural" time a kind of primacy (Gell 1998: 15). For its part, international state socialism offered its own challenge to the social/environmental distinction, but more forcefully and in the opposite direction from Gell's example. As a Promethean project rooted in modernist taxonomies and subordination of nature to industrial human will, socialist progressivism worked to efface the divide by bending "natural" rhythms to the social order and forging an entire environment of man-made time. Ritual rhythms were tethered not to seasonal cosmology such as the imperial sixty-year cycle subversively applied to socialist history in the Yan Lianke epigraph above, but to all-too-human revolutions and party foundings. This relentless parade of synchronized celebrations amid a wider exchange of "culture" across borders confirmed China, the USSR, and Korea as units tessellating in the socialist present. But in order fully to drape natural time in a social canvas, past and future also required attention. Extensive cross-border work thus went into harmonizing the human-centered temporal thread followed by socialist peoples, producing compatible narratives, language, and symbolism befitting progress's Janus-faced orientation.

Compatible Pasts

Looking backwards, both recent and distant pasts were reforged into cross-border socialist histories. The narrative streamlining of "useable pasts" is a widely attested means for modern nations to assert present-day legitimacy (Hobsbawm

and Ranger 1983), but as ever state socialism sharpened this process. As Susan Buck-Morss (2002: 43) observes for Russia, much of the newness of the Bolsheviks' revolutionary project lay in its efforts to suture inchoate episodes of "violent rupture"—including October 1917—into a linear Marxian-materialist historical thread. But finding pasts that had genuine "usability" across borders, particularly among vast multiethnic states such as the PRC and USSR, was a complex affair for materialist historiographers. Around Hunchun, appropriate histories had to be written notwithstanding the fact that linear national borders ran through the theatres of entangled socialist struggles from which now-discrete Chinese, Soviet, and Korean states had emerged, and divided co-members of cross-border "nations." The countervailing dynamics of unity and distinction inherent to socialist Friendship thus also had to make sense over the longue durée (cf. Lazar 2014). Marshaling borderland dwellers including Chosŏnjok and Han residents of Yanbian and Russian and Korean inhabitants of Soviet Primorye into compatible pasts required disciplined narratives that shared both formal emphasis on certain isomorphic tropes (e.g., partisan resistance against colonial/bourgeois oppression) and specific commonalities in content.

Two 1959 Soviet publications covering the border area show how both ancient and recent pasts were brought into temporal tessellation. In one study, renowned archaeologist-ethnologist Aleksei Okladnikov (1959: 126) implies sympathy with the idea of overlapping pasts—and thus with Chinese grievances over land lost to foreign aggressors—by suggesting that artifacts from a post-Neolithic culture discovered between Vladivostok and Tetiukhe (map fig. I.3) had links with settlers from China proper. Of more recent temporal scope, historian I. Babichev's volume *The Participation of Chinese and Korean Laborers in the Civil War in the Far East* explicitly emphasizes Soviet support for China's struggle against "unequal treaties" (Babichev 1959: 24–26). Both these positions, striking given that Primorye itself was ceded to Russia in 1860 by such a treaty, would later be reversed in Soviet historiography. Yet in the 1950s such bygones mattered little because, as Babichev concludes, this was a new age:

> The participation of Chinese and Korean workers in the Soviet people's fight against the interventionists and White Guards was one of the most important stages in the formation of the unbreakable friendship [*nerushimaia druzhba*] between the Soviet, Chinese and Korean peoples. At the dawn of a new

era for mankind, the brotherhood [*bratstvo*] between them was strengthened by the blood of their finest sons.

. . .

The countries of the socialist camp provide selfless material and moral help to one another. They are tightly bound by the unbreakable friendship between them which is strengthening day by day [*den' oto dnia krepnushchaia*].

. . .

The unity of the socialist countries is the granite on which the armed forces of the imperialist Americans and the Syngman Lee clique who attacked the DPRK in 1950–53 aiming to enslave it have been smashed.

. . .

At present the workers of the Soviet Far East, direct neighbors of the Chinese and Korean peoples, maintain close productive and cultural connections with them. Metallurgists from the "Amurstal" factory (in Komsomolsk) process cast iron from China, and then send their output back there.

. . .

In the scientific research institutes of Khabarovsk work young scientists from China and Korea. Delegations from different Soviet Far Eastern districts and regions are often exchanged with neighboring provinces of China and Korea.

This shows that the friendship and cooperation between the Soviet, Chinese and Korean peoples are unbreakable and will lead them to the victory of Communism. (ibid.: 81–2).

Quoting Babichev at length reveals how the new historicity, which drew all states and peoples into a single progressive frame, was also woven from a common linguistic fabric. Mainstays such as "friendship" and "brotherhood", and evocation of a plant producing steel, the most socialist of metals,[23] are accompanied by epithets such as "unbreakable" and "growing day by day," which mimetically reproduce phrasing in *Yanbian ribao* above.

Language work[24] thus helped to harmonize the man-made "environmental" time of socialism in the PRC, USSR, and DPRK, in the process pushing usually-Soviet-derived linguistic forms into the social realm. As Yan Li (2018: 62–64) notes, 1950s Chinese citizens acquired "a whole new way of conceptualizing China's future" through the language of Soviet culture and politics, with both

sound-based Russian calques such as *Kangmintuan* (Comintern) and *dawalixi* (tovarishch [comrade]) and prosaic words like *gewasi* (kvass) and *bulaji* (dress) eliding with the progressive image of Sovietized fashions, culinary practices, and architecture. Linguistically mediated temporal alignment had important North Korean vectors too. Yanbian Korean was harmonized with the Pyongyang standard,[25] and language teaching materials expressed mimetic cross-border transference directly: one typical North Korean textbook for Russian learners of Korean offers examples of present-tense verb forms with sentences that include "Comrade Kim is both a worker and a student at the factory's technical college" and the eminently Promethean "Man is the master of nature and society and the most precious and powerful being on earth" (Kong 1994: 790–797). The physical frailty of this book, acquired during Pyongyang fieldwork in 2014, is consistent with its release shortly after the demise of the USSR and resulting North Korean economic collapse. But like other totems of temporally tessellating Friendship, its content reflects endurances considerably beyond mid-twentieth-century high socialism, even if the futures the new language described did not materialize.

Shared Futures and Permanent Progress

If weaving compatible pasts involved a tussle with thorny existing histories, projecting a common future was sometimes a more free-form affair. In Hunchun, pursuit of socialist Eden was animated not only by *Luna*-inspired fertilizer drives, for *Yanbian ribao* readers also learned of Soviet plans to beam wireless electricity from the moon,[26] and soaring living standards that meant helicopters would soon be used as taxis.[27] Such miracles were sure to reach China given the many Sino-Soviet exchanges that, as noted in coverage of one Science and Technology Conference in Beijing, "form part of the overall brotherly [*xiongdiban*] cooperation and unbreakable [*buke fen'ge*] commitment to friendly mutual assistance [*youhao huzhu*] between the two countries."[28] Events like this one (which focused on improving PRC metallurgy, natural gas, and microwave technology) lent credence to the commonplace dictum "the Soviet Union's today is our tomorrow" (Ch. *Sulian de jintian shi women de mingtian*, Kor. *Ssolyŏnŭi onŭlŭn uliŭi laeil ida*), which, as literary critic Tong Qingbing notes of his 1950s youth, captured a futurist mindset melding culture and technology. Absorbed in socialist realist films and books, Tong (2015: 95) wondered

at the USSR's magical (*shenqi*) new tractors and aircraft: "That was a poor time," he writes, "a time for worshipping heroes . . . at that time as far as we young people were concerned, 'The Soviet Union's today is our tomorrow' was more than just an empty slogan."

In the abstract, these promises resembled universal indicators of a kind of technologically embodied progress shared by all participants in the race for modernity. Yet the "catching up" dynamics of the Soviet today/our tomorrow dyad showed that the PRC and DPRK were in fact on a very specific futureward path. Realization of the techno-future was to be achieved via direct assistance, lauded by Chu Tŏkhae and Babichev above, from thousands of Soviet advisors who arrived in Chinese and Korean cities from 1953 (Kaple 1998: 119; Joo 2009: 179). They, along with students going the other way (McGuire 2017: 283–295), were human vectors for cultural, scientific, economic, and political transfers that transformed party, government, academic, military, and many other structures in the early PRC and DPRK. With new paradigms for everything from party-army relations to ethnic classification, both states became entities made up of subcomponents commensurate with their Soviet equivalents: as the inquisitive Chinese tourists in Rasŏn showed (Chapter 1), citizens became attuned to this cross-border structural legibility. Material advancement was thus about more than broad progressive alignment, bespeaking a defined isomorphic future into which all three states around Hunchun were moving.

Permeating everyday life through technological exchanges, production drives, Friendship aesthetics, and calendrical synchrony discussed already, the totalizing force of this common future was such that Tong's generation came to inhabit utopia before it arrived. As Elisabeth Croll (1993: 7) notes of Maoist China, "the present began to be experienced as if it was the future." This outsized place of anticipation in the present, equally evident in progress-suffused North Korea (Zur 2014) and the USSR (Buck-Morss 2002), worked alongside the disciplining of the past to effect temporal compression in both directions. Yet paradoxically, this taming of natural time by human ideological designs induced not so much linear acceleration as a kind of infinite deferral (Yurchak 2006; Papernyi 2006), a fossilization of progress akin to the temporal suspension that haunts empires.

Discussing celebrations of Stalin's seventieth birthday in 1949, Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (2006: 358–9)—drawing on art historian Boris Groys (2003)—highlights

the profound "timelessness" that characterized much of Soviet existence. While daily life involved plenty of immediate urgency, the state's weighty self-representation as a utopian project freed from the constraints of earthly time in fact froze history rather than speeding it up. Ordinary citizens therefore navigated uncannily "heterochronic" experiences of overlaid stasis and rush. Many of the formal aesthetics of Stalinist culture, as we have seen, shifted mimetically into performances of the triangular Friendship that enveloped mid-twentieth-century Hunchun. This managed socially to subjugate cross-border time, but thereby produced a comparable edifice of timeless progressivism, made explicit in commitments to "unbreakable" Friendships "as strong as steel."[29] For all the notional dynamism of forward movement and the heterochrony of frantic manure production campaigns, progress became a permanent end in itself.

This atmosphere of timeless unbreakability in part, I suggest, explains why vestiges of progressive Friendship endure today despite the end of Stalinist/Maoist statism. This demise, as Croll (1993: 7) observes, brought distant temporal horizons collapsing into an all-too-immediate presentism, yet as shown throughout this book so far, Friendship and progress remain meaningful for contemporary Hunchun people. There are, however, further reasons for this. Aside from the gaudy "cultural" paraphernalia that fused the project's representational and practical aspects, less contrived textures also fed into its permanence. These at times exceeded the linear bounds of the taxonomizing regimes that produced them, but in so doing made the frameworks promoted by those regimes more persuasive.

Textured Time

Both within and across borders, state socialism's strictly structured environmental project intended to dispel the doubt and conflict that pervade temporal experience under capitalism in its modern industrial (Marx 2011; Thompson 1967) and postmodern guises (Bear 2014: 6). Permanent Friendship and progress among isomorphic units left little ambiguity about Hunchun people's designated historical path. As the 1949 Soviet song "Moscow-Beijing" declares: "Russians and Chinese are brothers forever . . . moving forward under the banner of freedom in the name of glorious labor and lasting peace."

Cultural invocations of permanence also mirrored the unforgiving fixity of socialist governance: at precisely the time when atmospherics of forward dynamism and "freedom" were peaking, populations around Hunchun were increasingly subject to documentary and monitoring regimes, which restricted movement throughout Yanbian, southern Primorye, and northeastern Korea. Everyday contact between socialist populations was modest and, when it occurred, was dogged by suspicion and bureaucracy.[30] Along the Sino-Soviet border during the 1950s and 1960s, adjacent locations engaged in low-level trade of domestic goods, including Soviet-made buckets, spades, scythes, chimney linings, soap, and firewood. But for all Friendship's notional long-termism, this exchange was conducted under cautious yearly agreements rather than any more durable framework (Frolov 2007: 43–7). Some tourists crossed from the eastern USSR to China, with around five hundred Soviet citizens from Khabarovsk krai visiting the PRC between May 1956 and June 1958, for example (44–45). But such figures were tiny in the context of the Soviet or Chinese populations, and Hunchun—which until recently has seen as many Russian arrivals in a single day—did not feature on itineraries, given its remoteness and proximity to the sensitive triple seam of socialist unity. Most transnational movement occurred between regional centers such as Harbin, Vladivostok, or Chŏngjin and was performed by scientific delegations, Friendship Society members, athletes, experts, students, or dance troupes whose shows were attended by squads of cadres.[31] With unsupervised contact difficult, encounters with cultural difference were thus as choreographed as the categories through which that difference could permissibly be performed: during my fieldwork madamae and other older Hunchun residents' sense of disorientation at all the Russians around emerged precisely because of a lack of cross-border interaction with citizens of the "Soviet elder brother" (*Sulian lao dage*) earlier in life. Yet there were nevertheless limits to the rigid linearities of cross-border fixity.

Indeed, even in the synchrony-affirming contents of *Yanbian ribao*, Friendship exceeded the formal bounds of its ideal-type. For all that Soviet cosmic achievements presaged a specifically socialist future awaiting China, news of them in this agrarian region appeared under headers that included the Chinese lunar (*xiali*) as well as the solar calendar date: *Luna*'s feats occurred both on January 5, 1960 and on the seventh day of the twelfth month of Jihai year (*jihai nian*

shi'er yue chu qi). Reporting on technological feats, moreover, took classical form by deploying centuries-old Chinese literary devices. A *Luna*-focused headline using two seven-syllable rhythmic couplets—and invoking Guanghan, the mythical Chinese Moon Palace—read:

宇宙火箭探广寒　　　万民欢笑頌苏联
兄弟国家欢呼宇宙火箭腾空[32]

"Space Rocket Visits Guanghan　　　Masses Gleefully Extol the Soviet Union
Brother Countries Hail the Space Rocket Soaring into the Sky"

Exalting the sentiments they expressed, language and allegory rooted Soviet expansiveness in the granular tempo of Chinese poetic meter (see Link 2013: 268).

What Saurabh Dube (2004) calls "mythic pasts" were also embedded in utopian modernity's visual register: one *Yanbian ribao* cartoon (fig. 3.2) shows a personified *Luna* shaking hands with Chang'e, the Chinese moon goddess, and although this is described as a "rare encounter" (*nande de huijian*), other imagery from the time suggests that Soviet cosmonauts consorted regularly with the Chinese pantheon.[33]

Finally, cinema too saw Friendship bursting beyond its taxonomical trappings. As Nan Hu (2020: 27) observes in a study of dubbed 1940s-50s Soviet films in China, voice actors would pronounce Russian words in a manner that hovered somewhere between Chinese and Russian, for example by modifying tones on certain syllables of the name *Sidalin* (Stalin). The deployment of this technique, while partly "domesticating" the films as mimesis demanded, also left a kind of foreignness intact, with actors' voices sounding "strange, because they did not fit into the stylized and over-politicized soundscape of socialist China." This, Hu argues, opened up alternative interpretations of Sino-Soviet Friendship. Indeed, the exoticism of such formal experimentation might well have been one reason why many Chinese viewers enjoyed Soviet films in the first place.

The fact that audiences looked to something as subtle as occasional nonstandard pronunciation for this kind of heterodox frisson again testifies to the near hegemony of Friendship's formalism. But whether embodied in lunar deities or linguistic slippage, these were ways of thinking beyond the lockstep strictures of Chinese, Soviet, and Korean temporal alignment. As in Adorno and Horkheimer's (1997) exposition of modernity's inherent dialecticism, high socialism became engulfed in its own mythology. Culturally clothed appeals

FIGURE 3.2: “A rare encounter” by Nan Xiuji, *Yanbian ribao* January 14, 1959.

to affective Friendship lent temporal concepts greater plausibility but also allowed progressivism to elude regimentation by becoming less about socialist solidarity and more about cultural exotica. These human textures and the interplay between domestication and foreignness help us understand why atmospherics of cross-border Friendship subsequently endured through several ideologically tumultuous decades, from the 1960s up to the postsocialist present, and permit an anthropological reappraisal of taxonomical socialist modernity.

Temporal Rift and Endurance

Just as cross-border relations seemed to have attained clockwork regularity, Sino-Soviet Friendship started unwinding. The term "Split" (Ch. *jiaowu*, Rus. *raskol*), which is applied to the post-1960 period of soured relations, implies a sudden break from the practices of the preceding decade, culminating in China with the violence and xenophobia of the 1966–1976 Cultural Revolution (Lüthi 2008). But *Yanbian ribao* shows that synchrony slipped slowly. Watersheds in Friendship's demise such as the July 1960 withdrawal of Soviet experts from China (Chen and Yang 1998: 275), the 1961 exclusion of China from Soviet tourist itineraries (Orlov 2014: 27), or the 1967 closure of cross-border trade (Holzlehner 2018: 68) went unremarked, and even in the mid-1960s local events suggested an inclination toward partial temporal alignment.[34] Lenin's 1965 birthday was marked,[35] and Soviet Victory Day that year was still a sufficiently important temporal anchor to inspire an entire film festival in Yanji featuring eight Soviet,[36] two Polish, one Albanian, and five East German productions.[37]

Nevertheless, as Hunchun residents entered a period when, as locals reflect today, "there was no information at all" from over the border, newspaper editorials signaled a deepening divide. Headlines throughout the 1960s escalated from "On the Stalin Question"[38] to "The Soviet Communist Leaders Are the Biggest Splittists of Our Age"[39] (cf. Wu 1998: 205). Destalinization in Moscow was condemned as "revisionism," and Khrushchev's vision for coexistence with the West cast as a historical deviation away from "the true united path of anti-Americanism."[40] By contrast, the rectitude of China's trajectory was demonstrated as Mao Zedong Thought now leaped back through history to claim a direct Leninist lineage. Maoist dictums (*yulu*) appearing on *Yanbian ribao*'s front pages by the 1970s stressed the need to interpret Lenin's theories correctly:

> Why did Lenin speak out against the dictatorship of the capitalist class?

the paper asked rhetorically on June 3, 1975:

> This question must be understood clearly to avoid revisionism.[41]

As the Soviets started backsliding through history toward the morally decrepit capitalist West, the period of Sino-Soviet synchrony, which had brought so many of Lenin's ideas to China, was compressed into insignificance.

Recriminations were mutual: writing in a 1981 book *Maoism: The Threat of War*, Soviet military historian Dmitri Volkogonov declared that "supporting Maoist visions has always brought social deprivation and real *regression* [*regress*] to the people" (Volkogonov 1981, my stress). The fabric of socialist time was rent in two as the socialist cosmos, per Radchenko (2009), now had two suns.

Temporal divergence also caused spatial tessellation to slip as borderlands like Hunchun became sites of friction. In *Yanbian ribao*, weeks of patriotic anti-revisionist editorials, maps, and photographs covered the March 1969 Sino-Soviet border war over Damanskii Island/Zhenbaodao on the Ussuri River.[42] The very border once key to delineating commensurate Friendly counterparts was now a dangerous temporal chasm, and Hunchun was poised on the frontline. Workers at the local Cement Factory "fiercely criticized" Soviet policy, while one local timber collective at Daxinggou was renamed "Oppose Revisionism Forestry" (*Fanxiu linchang*).[43] Inverting the earlier transnational unities of socialist cinema, the impermeability of the Sino-Soviet border was performatively inscribed as young soldiers endured climatic extremes to carry projection equipment "up the mountain roads of the frontier" and show revolutionary films in villages outside Hunchun.[44] This, readers learned from familiarly ferrous phrasing, would construct an "iron Great Wall" (*gangtie Changcheng*) of Chinese proletarian fervor directly on revisionist borders.[45]

Neither territory nor history could be shared any longer as isomorphic pasts were also dismantled. The true motives of the Soviets during the Chinese Civil War were now questioned, with articles suspecting a plot with the United States to create "two Chinas" like divided Korea. Over the border, territorial de-Sinification occasioned both the renaming of Primorye toponyms (see Chapter 4) and reevaluations of regional civilizational overlaps. In the late 1960s Okladnikov performed a *volte-face* in his earlier agricultural and migratory theories, positing an indigenous center of cultivation north of the Amur as the source of technologies transferred southward to China, not the reverse (Okladnikov and Brodianskii 1969). In contrast to Babichev, histories of the Russian Civil War from the 1970s underplayed Chinese or Korean contributions to the eastern partisan struggle.

Amid the Cultural Revolution's blossoming Mao cult, nationwide campaigns transformed this borderland locale. Mirroring the new Soviet intolerance for ethnic overlaps, large numbers of urban Han youths, eighteen thousand from Shanghai alone, were "sent down" to rural Yanbian, causing radical demographic

shifts (Piao S. 1999; Tsurushima 1979: 98). Conversely many Hunchun people, including my Chosŏnjok host grandmother, left to join Red Guard brigades—real or fake. Madamae's time in Ulanhot, Inner Mongolia, was a scam, but the Chinese she had to learn there still effected cultural change. Foreign contact on all sides was stigmatized in Hunchun at this time, including for Chosŏnjok with North Korean relatives. As Kim Il Sung cultivated his own rival personality cult, "Korean revisionism" (*Chaoxiu*) received condemnation, and those apprehended while crossing the newly fractious Tumen were publicly executed on the site of today's peaceful Longyuan Park (map fig. 2.1). Some local Chosŏnjok did escape south to what was then, after all, a better off, Korean-speaking milieu, although heart-rending experiences of family separation and left-behind children ensued (Pulford 2015). In Yanji, Yanbian University temporarily closed from June 1966, its extensive Soviet and DPRK links (Cathcart 2010) targets of Red Guard criticism.

Enduring Friendship

Yet amid this realignment, the unfolding of the Split in *Yanbian ribao* paradoxically revealed that now-defunct "permanent" relations had left a profound imprint. Friendship constituted by progress and boundedness remained the moral lodestar of China's foreign relationships. As 1960s to 1970s global decolonization birthed dozens of new sovereigns and thousands of kilometers of borders, Beijing's overtures to independent African and Asian states reaffirmed Friendship's role as a bond spanning boundaries among discrete but united polities. Hunchun people's front pages reported often on visits to the capital by leaders such as the presidents of Gambia[46] and Gabon,[47] while foreign news covered trade conferences and the opening of a new Sino-Malian Friendship Well, bored using Chinese technology.[48] Early in the decolonization movement, devising socialist programs that would appeal to aspiring post-colonies (Pitcher and Askew 2006: 7) had been a Soviet-led joint project. But in a temporally fractured world, this was now a theater of Sino-Soviet competition as *grands projets* such as the PRC-built TAZARA railway linking the Zambian Copperbelt to the Tanzanian coast vied with Moscow's new 1960s Friendship outreach to Mozambique and Congo (Roshchin 2009b: 377). Pyongyang's projection of socialist leadership to the global south as it triangulated ties to both Beijing and Moscow (Young 2021) was generally framed in *Yanbian ribao* as compatible with China's. Detailed reports on a 1975 visit by Kim Il Sung to Algeria and Mauritania resembled a domestic news story, dutifully noting

his comments about "working diligently to strengthen the friendship [*youyi*] and solidarity between the Korean and Algerian peoples."[49] Kim returned via Romania and Bulgaria, only to be met in Pyongyang by a visiting King Sihanouk of Cambodia.[50] The ceremonial circulation of Friendly leaders barely paused for breath.

Friendship's status as a new bone of Sino-Soviet contention meant that its once-totalizing tapestry began to be picked apart. Even while condemning "anti-Chinese criminal schemes" (*fanhua zui'e goudang*) hatched in Moscow, newspaper articles still praised the pure Soviet masses and their "traditional revolutionary friendship [*chuantong geming youyi*] with the Chinese people."[51] The bond thus remained paramount for synchronizing cross-border revolutionary histories, but unlike China the USSR was now violating principles of bounded agency with a form of "socialist imperialism." During the US-Vietnam War, Soviet policy appeared no better than that of the American "bandits" (*qiangdao*), while conversely the PRC's Friendly stance found familiar culturalist expression: one fiery anti-Soviet article by two Yanbian cadets was accompanied by a full musical score and rousing lyrics for a pro-Vietnam song.[52] Several years later, coverage of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, and the 1978 Brezhnev Friendship Treaty with Afghan Communist leader Nur Mohammed Taraki, asked, "What Kind of Rubbish [*huose*] Is a Moscow-branded 'Friendship and Cooperation' Treaty?"[53] and, testament to the endurance of guerrilla tropes in mythic socialist prehistories, praised the partisans resisting it.[54] Fierce questioning of this agreement almost seemed to imply that Mao Zedong might himself have signed an "unequal treaty" thirty years previously.

If condemnations of Soviet Friendship rang louder given the breathless positivity that once surrounded it, coverage of domestic affairs in the USSR also bore its own spoiled cargo from an earlier era. One florid 1975 article syndicated from *People's Daily*[55] saw a journalist named Xin Yu eviscerate the Soviet "neo-tsarism" unfolding in Turkmenistan, where the despotic boss of a camel "ranch" spent his vast profits—enough to buy several Volga cars—on a private helicopter, forcing workers into low-waged servitude. In a state now run, according to *Yanbian ribao*, by a profiteering capitalist bureaucracy,[56] the mechanized technologies that had once been inspirational symbols of China's "tomorrow" had become perverted tokens of exploitative excess.

What all this moral outrage shows is that, even in the Cultural Revolution's most anti-Soviet days, a four-page newspaper in China's remote northeast still upheld ideals of coterminous progress, Friendship, and bounded agency.

Criticism of their disaggregation only reinforced this. Like *Luna* soaring from amid columns reporting on Great Leap Forward manure collection, lofty internationalism still contrasted with earthier concerns. Editions covering Kim Il Sung's North African tour also recorded Hunchun collectives' successes in transplanting rice seedlings,[57] and early quota fulfilment at the local cement factory.[58] Global socialist diplomacy and local production improvements thus remained part of the same story of permanent progress among firm friends, albeit now excluding the USSR. That these principles prevailed amid fracturing temporalities and an increasingly inimical international environment invites broader reassessment of socialist cross-border Friendship. Like modernity at large, international Friendship was an idea with pre-socialist roots. But in its categorical state-socialist form, many of the relationship's features—including its high moralism—have as much in common with bonds known in anthropology as "ritualized relations" as with "friendship" per se. Exploring this offers textured ways of thinking about socialist modernity, its endurances in the postsocialist present, and interstate politics in general.

The Morality of Progress

As I have shown, the mechanics and semantics of Soviet-style socialist modernity around Hunchun offered a framework for the bounded self-determination sought by many decolonizing nations. Adopting this model meant escaping Chakrabarty's "waiting room of history" into a cross-border realm of sovereign progressive time. Friendship buttressed the project, both as a vector for transferring Soviet taxonomies across borders, and as a highly moral relationship to be performed. Through mimetic display and exchange, coparticipants demonstrated their coeval, commensurate differentness within a voluntary, egalitarian system and, united in diversity, asserted a righteous historical choice to leave degenerate times and places behind. Yet cross-border Friendship also operated in a more textured manner than its architects might have preferred. Culturalist performance and harmonized histories revealed the elaborate work that sustained the project, but the timeless horizon of relations strengthening "day by day" was punctuated by moments of cross-border slippage that defied formal unity.

None of this is surprising given that friendship—however generically positively viewed—is, after all, a highly mutable human relationship to apply to

projects predicated on dispassionate taxonomization. Practices and ideals of friendship vary across time and space: *youyi*, *druzhba*, and *chinsŏn* connote different things in Chinese, Russian, and Korean societies. In the final part of this chapter I examine this interplay between cross-border variation and international standardization to suggest a new understanding of the relationship, its morality and its longevity. Friendship's endurance beyond the end of socialist time may have something to do with how it became a valorized interstate relationship in the first place.

Friendships Past

Interstate friendship has a modern history located further from Hunchun than its above-discussed Soviet inheritance. As Evgeny Roshchin notes, having arisen in post–Enlightenment Europe, the idea reached Russia in the eighteenth century as reciprocal exchanges of treaties of friendship (*druzhba*) became the norm among states adhering to principles of bounded Westphalian statehood (Roshchin 2009a: 126–132). Earlier, the Duchy of Moscow had issued charters unilaterally proclaiming "love" (*liubov'*) for other powers, but while this had worked among fuzzy political entities with shifting boundaries, friendship described horizontal, reciprocal bonds between discrete bodies (Roshchin 2009b). It was thus reciprocally constitutive with bounded sovereignty from the beginning, as entering Friendship entailed submission to an agreed regime of tessellating statehood. These ideas washed over the Hunchun region (thitherto home to more Muscovy-style overlaps[59]) before state socialism, as powers from British interventionists in the Russian Civil War to Japanese colonists in China invoked "friendship" to portray their expansive ambitions as benign. Conversely, post-Qing and still-semi-colonized Republican China (1912–1949) itself released a "Manifesto to All Friendly Nations" (*Xuangao ge youbang shu*) in January 1912 (Xu 2001: 108), an appeal answered in 1945 when Moscow concluded a Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance[60] with the Republic, five years before the Stalin-Mao agreement.

Interstate Friendship's pre-socialist origins are important, since they rest on a historically and culturally specific conception of *friendship among persons*. In the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European arena discussed by Roshchin, the statesmen (all men) who drafted Friendship treaties were themselves steeped in Enlightenment notions of the relationship as a bond among individuated,

sentimental selves (Cooper 1999: 368). Indeed, celebrations of this kind of interpersonal tie were flourishing precisely as new bordered states were emerging from republican revolutions both sides of the Atlantic (Tenbruck 1964). In Russia, the same intellectuals involved in modernizing reforms under Tsar Peter the Great nurtured the idea of the agentive "self" (*samost'*) (Kalugin 2009: 188; 280–1), while American frontier individualist Ralph Waldo Emerson ([1841] 1993: 47–48) idealized personal friendship in words equally applicable to bounded sovereign polities:

> Let it be an alliance of two large, formidable natures, mutually beheld, mutually feared, before yet they recognize the deep identity which beneath these disparities unites them.

Among men who were authors of both social and political transformations, mapping individualized friendship onto bordered states (a fitting metaphor in an era of cartographic innovation) was an understandable reflex.

Through shared—if tangled—intellectual threads back to revolutionary European republicanism (Skocpol 1979), the USSR, PRC, and DPRK each inherited these ideas. The very names of these twentieth-century states—long in their own languages, unwieldy acronyms in European ones[61]—reflect this lineage, with core compositional elements such as "socialist" and "republic" rooted etymologically in Latinate French thought for Russian, and Japanese-coined linguistic responses to European modernity for Chinese and Korean.[62] Reinforcing these mimetic pathways back to Enlightenment Europe's sentimental intellectuals and Westphalian polities, the interpersonal bond most idealized under Chinese, Soviet, and Korean socialisms was that between Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Paeans to their *Great and Touching Friendship* or their *Revolutionary Stories*—to borrow the titles of one oft-reissued Soviet book (Sukhotin and Vidgop 1958, Chinese version: Weitegepu and Suhuojing 1983) and one Yanbian Korean one (Hong 1978)—attributed the strength of their bond and utopian genius to their characters as powerful minds, united yet independent (Kon 1987: 110).[63]

In light of discussions earlier in this book, it is evident that the principles undergirding 1950s to 1960s Sino-Soviet-Korean interstate ties would have differed significantly from Hunchun residents' own understandings of friendship in daily life. Given the spatiotemporal distance between Enlightenment Europe and revolutionary China and Korea in particular, it was thus little wonder that sustaining the Friendship-progress complex required the extensive work

I have documented. But whatever local ideas of relationality and personhood predominated in Hunchun, the project continued with all its temporal scaffolding, cultural freighting, breakdowns, and legacies. In doing so, it exhibited unexpected yet revealing similarities to an anthropological category known as "ritual relations" or "blood brotherhoods." Socialist Friendship's resemblance to this bond among often non-modern people forming groups much smaller than nation-states both helps us to understand it better and demonstrates further mythic textures at its heart.

Socialist Blood Brotherhoods

Across cultures, anthropologists have long studied societies where ceremonial kin-like relationships are established among non-kin counterparts. The rituals involved vary, but in settings as diverse as Papua New Guinea (Burridge 1957), North Africa (Evans-Pritchard 1933), and Polynesia (Firth 1967), these bonds share many of the formally voluntary, affective, egalitarian, unbreakable, gendered, and temporal qualities of socialist Friendship. Comparable relationships also exist in Chinese, Russian, and Korean social worlds, as we will see.

Much of the classic scholarship in which these relationships are theorized takes a taxonomical approach to human sociality common in early anthropology, and thus draws a functionalist distinction between ritual relations and friendship. Seen as an individual, sentimental tie (Beer 1998: 192–195), the latter is considered essentially nonexistent in "traditional" societies where social and family structures constrain the possibility of elective friendship (Fortes 1953: 28). Given anthropology's Euro-American disciplinary roots, it is perhaps unsurprising that Enlightenment visions of individualized friendships and sentimental subjectivity were central to its formative analyses. Thankfully, recent work has moved beyond comparing everything to European practices, adopting a more capacious approach to globally varied relationships understood as friendship (Desai and Killick 2013; Descharmes et al. 2011). Yet the earlier bracketing off of blood brotherhoods from friendship is nevertheless revealing in highlighting how a type of bond considered outside "modern" Enlightenment sociality in fact became a core feature of high socialism's progressive project.

Ritual relations are often established through sanguinary exchange, with practices resembling Evans-Pritchard's (1933) account of Zande men imbibing drops of one another's blood to become "blood brothers" (*abakurëmi*). Like

socialist Friendship's invocations of the blood of common revolutionary struggle (H. Kwon 2013: 10), this draws attention to the entanglement of friendship and kinship idioms: sharing blood extends kin logics beyond the "natural" family or household, an ambition as evident in revolutionary Friendship's associations with "brotherhood" (Rus. *bratstvo*, Ch. *xiongdiban youyi*)[64] as in ritualized Zande attachments to new fictive siblings. Further, these bonds are sealed between metonymic representatives of larger groups who are drawn into generalized apposition, like socialism's Friendly "peoples." For the Azande, "all clansmen of *bakurëmi*, my blood brother, are *abakurëmi*, my blood brothers" (Evans-Pritchard 1933: 392), while for Tangu men in Papua New Guinea, "all the sons of two men who are friends are friends with each other" (Burridge 1957: 178). Some socialist leaders have, as in twentieth-century Romania (Polexe 2011) or East Germany (Danzer 2012), or indeed Xi and Putin today, deliberately performed fraternal bonhomie. But even when bonds among leaders are not warm, they are always represented as such: none of the condescending friction which dogged Mao's treaty-signing visit to Moscow in 1950 was disclosed at the time (Heinzig 2015: 363–4), while within China fictional tales of a wartime friendship between Mongol Communist leader Ulanhu and Chinese warlord Fu Zuoyi have been mobilized to dragoon Mongols into official amity with the Han (Bulag 2010: 145).

Also like the collective citizenries of socialist states, ritual relations are sought among foreign others "far outside the home boundaries . . . people of different languages and distinct forms of social organization" (Burridge 1957: 188). This does not preclude the kind of mimetic transfer seen among countries sharing Soviet-style statism, for Zande blood brotherhoods are often made among the "semi-Zandeized Mbegumba and Mberidi" (Evans-Pritchard 1933: 373). But reflecting the ever-looming threat of friendship's inversion, whether posed by resource scarcity or Cold War geopolitics, desirable blood brothers are often those with whom one wishes to avoid confrontation. As in the Sino-Soviet case, this is not always successful, and proximity can breed distrust: Tangu friendships may lead to inter-community marriage, but also bring "two villages closer to one another, thus making disputes between them more likely" (Burridge 1957: 184). And while this may overextend the comparison into specious realist international relations analysis, violations of blood brotherhoods also lead to drastic sanctions enforced by the wider group, like border wars erupting if "unbreakable" friendships collapse.

If successful, however, these ties are crucial for formalizing cultural difference in legible form. Indeed, Evans-Pritchard reports himself being invited into blood brotherhoods with Zande who saw this as an efficacious way to include a European interloper. Through balanced, performed relations, wider appositional groups engage in mutual assistance and, like the Zande, Mbegumba, and Mberidi (Evans-Pritchard 1933: 380) or the Soviet, Chinese, and Korean Amurstal workers mentioned by Babichev, conduct politico-economic exchange. Tikopia bond friendships are, like socialist ones, celebrated in song.

The parallels between these moralized relationships, sealed via rituals of blood or treaty among collectivities that might otherwise be enemies, cast socialist progressive Friendship in a new light. Firstly, as throughout this book, they show that for all cross-border socialism's modernizing, rationally taxonomical impulses, it rested on relational foundations that its own proponents would have considered "backward" relics of primitive premodern pasts. Secondly, and relatedly, it underscores that, like blood *brothe*rhood, interstate friendship has been a primarily masculinized social arena. Zande relationships sustained by robust jocularity and rarely involving women (Evans-Pritchard 1933: 390) echo the monotonous maleness of political friendships among Enlightenment intellectuals (Derrida 2005: 155–9, critiquing Schmitt [1932] 2008). Around Hunchun these gendered atmospherics were not solely a product of the Euro-Marxist inheritance, however, for as the next chapter shows, cross-border Chinese, Korean, and Soviet socialisms had their own local male pedigree. This included invocation of ritualized relationships, for the Hunchun-centered partisan struggles that laid the foundations for socialist statehood activated heroic visions drawn from Russian legends of *pobratimstvo* (sworn brotherhood) and Confucian *xiongdi*/*hyŏngjae* ("brother") relations celebrated in Chinese and Korean literary classics.[65] These mythic fraternities demanding parity, mutual assistance, and social sanction (including death) for disloyalty were transposed into brotherly Chinese-Soviet-Korean state Friendships and, given the pungent masculinities of Hunchun's contemporary frontier of capital, have also assumed postmodern form.

The third benefit of comparing classic ethnographies of small-scale societies and socialist international relations returns us to a focus on the temporality and morality of "permanent" progressive bonds. As discussed in Chapter 2, in work on interpersonal dynamics in a Merina community in Madagascar,

Maurice Bloch (1973) posits a correlation between the "moral" qualities of a relationship and its "term," that is the period over which imbalances in reciprocity are tolerated among parties. A kind of continuum thus exists between binding, unconditional kinship, whose tolerance for imbalance is greatest, and "political, neighborhood or friendship" relations (1973: 77) with a shorter "term" and thus less morality. Importantly, and whatever the nature of Merina politics, "fictive" kin-like relationships such as blood brotherhoods are closer to kinship. Socialist Friendship, with its timeless futurism, can thus be seen as having comparably long-term, moral value. As we have seen, a rich variety of cultural textures contributed to affirming this relationship's permanence and righteousness, making it, like blood brotherhood, very "expensive" to discard. Its breakdown meant, as in Merina society, both that outstanding obligations suddenly became intolerable, and that high morality was turned on its head: the execrable former friend was now banished into an errant realm of moral deviancy along a capitalist, imperialist, or revisionist historical path. Yet as demonstrated at the outset of this chapter, the value attached to Friendship in its idealized form remained, through the Sino-Soviet Split and up to a present in which the states around Hunchun are no longer taxonomically defined agents of socialist progressivism but containers for postsocialist nationalisms.

Conclusion: Remnant Textures

Socialist Friendship and enmity alike thus show how the PRC, USSR, and DPRK constructed fictive political kinship moralized via the rituals, aesthetics, and language of modern statism. Among coterminously bordered and progressive polities with little vernacular cross-border contact, isomorphic repertoires of performed culture became overdeterminant expressions of categorical difference, and of the Friendship that transcended it. This culturalism, and the humane value conferred on the tie by its textures and slippages, explain why Friendship still resonates long after doctrinaire socialism's demise in all three countries. If this experience reveals a Mitchellian "effect" of a formal "state"/"society" separation produced by the latter being paradoxically embedded in the former, then the project's impulse for separation *among* states was highly effective: the exclusivist nationalisms now evident in Russia's Z-patriotism around the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, North Korea's recently atomic anti-Americanism,

and China's suppression of ethnic difference at home and "wolf warrior" diplomacy abroad all reveal the tenacity of performative political forms delineated under high socialism. Neither Friendship nor national "culture" would have their enduring appeal without the balance of mimesis and adaptation, which made them meaningful *both* as virtuous shared endeavors *and* as things with distinctive value in each place.

Since high socialism's demise, an absence of ideological unity among the states around Hunchun has not prevented triangular relations between them being continually reframed in Friendly terms. In 2001 Presidents Jiang Zemin and Putin signed a new Sino-Russian Treaty of Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation,[66] while in 2000 Putin and Kim Jong Il concluded a Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness and Cooperation.[67] In the absence of shifts as epochal as the Soviet collapse in either country, Beijing and Pyongyang remain bound by a 1961 Sino-Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance[68] sealed between Mao and Kim Il Sung. Friendship has also continued to define international connections across the wider (post)socialist world. Still in the 1990s, Kim Jong Il, invoking eternity and self-possession, was declaring Pyongyang's commitment to "strengthening international solidarity and developing the relations of friendship and cooperation with the peoples of all countries who aspire to independence . . ." (Kim 1999: 81). North Korea and Russia, as well as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Cuba, have Friendship Associations to manage external relations, and confer Friendship Medals on foreign dignitaries. But China presides over the world's largest postsocialist Friendship-diplomatic complex, with Beijing defining most of its significant relationships on all continents as Friendships (Nordin and Smith 2018). At the 2018 ceremony where Putin received the PRC Friendship Medal, Xi Jinping described him as his "best and most intimate friend" (*zhixin pengyou*).[69] As the sambo opening and numerous other Sino-Russo-Korean events held in Hunchun[70] show, these contemporary relationships are sustained by familiar cultural forms. Nearby parts of Russia and Korea also host similar festivities, although less often: Friendship performance is another sphere in which Chinese interest, and financing, predominates across the frontier of capital.

Notwithstanding these continuities, however, today's formal amity is staged amid vernacular cross-border encounters and postmodern temporalities that are looser and more asynchronous than the mid-twentieth-century context. Neither

socialist-era treaties nor 1950s to 1960s newspaper reporting ever referred to the fact that China, the Soviet Union, and North Korea were physically connected. Borders mattered as categorical separators, not as actual places, and states preferred to interact on the deterritorialized plane of abstract nationhood. But the presence of "good neighborliness" (Ch. *mulin*, Rus. *dobrososedstvo*, Kor. *sŏllin*) in post-2000 treaties acknowledges the possibility of Russians, Chinese, Koreans, and perhaps Western anthropologists, interacting in Hunchun. Today's culturalized encounters are also considerably more heterodox than under high socialism. In an era when Chang'e, who once meekly sat awaiting *Luna*'s handshake, is the eponymous avatar of the PRC's own lunar missions, Chinese audiences know little of contemporary Russian culture: the old Changchun Film Studio building is now a museum, and, long after Yanbian's Soviet film festivals, in 2015 only one Russian film, the animated feature *Snow Queen* (*Snezhnaia koroleva*), went on general release in China. Almost all of the PRC's annual foreign film quota of 34 were Hollywood blockbusters.[71]

But where staged Friendship does persist, it remains an indicator of how far cross-border temporal and historical trajectories are aligned. In October 2015, several months after the sambo event, Hunchun hosted a Sino-Korean-Russian "Evening of Friendship" (Ch. *Youyi zhi ye*; Rus. *Druzhestvennyi vecher*; Kor. *Uoŭi bam*) alongside the 2nd Northeast Asian International Logistics Conference. Russian folk dances from local students and a Chinese display of Sichuan opera masks were predictable staples. But strikingly, the evening also featured a performance by the all-female K-pop group FLASHE, who had flown in two days previously from Seoul. The third side of the Friendship triangle was thus *South* Korea, and it was the ROK's Shenyang consul who stood beside his Russian counterpart to tether culture to state, and anchor Yanbian-Korea connections. Given the official backing K-culture receives as part of the Seoul government's global soft power strategy, FLASHE's raucous melodies and deconstructionist attire were arguably no less culturally statist than North Korean folk dances described in *Yanbian ribao* decades earlier. The prim socialist traditionalism of the Russian performance made the Evening of Friendship a distinctly heterochronic occasion in both politics and aesthetics, yet all three countries were engaged in some form of time work.

Shared linear temporality may feature less in postsocialist Friendship, but efforts to discipline unruly pasts into useable cross-border histories have not disappeared either. On September 3, 2015 every channel on every television in

Hunchun—that is ten national, two provincial, two prefectural, and four town channels, and one Russian- and one English-language channel[72]—broadcast China's grandiose commemorations for the seventieth anniversary of the end of World War Two live from Beijing. Describing the shared televisual experiences which help forge national community in Egypt, Lila Abu-Lughod writes of "dramas of nationhood" (2005), which are literal TV dramas; this spectacle was, however, literally national, a full-throated performance of the state's stateness embodied in its arsenal and leadership. On the Tiananmen rostrum next to Xi stood Putin, who had in turn hosted him at Moscow's Victory Day parade in May the same year, watching the missiles and tanks rumble past. With Western leaders absent on both occasions, this bodily exchange bespoke a wider recent project to synchronize China's World War II record with that of Russia and the Allies. As Rana Mitter (2020) notes, by suturing the ruptures of the 1930s and 1940s into an anti-Japanese, anti-fascist struggle rather than part of the Chinese Civil War, Beijing's national dramaturgs have been working to establish China's place among history's "victors" and thus claim a greater stake in the post-1945 global order. Just as Russia's cooling relations with the West—deep frozen since 2022—leave few non-Chinese customers for Siberian hydrocarbons, therefore, Russian war history too has become an attractive resource for the PRC state. Like earlier harmonizations of Sino-Soviet-Korean history, this trend is sustained by a performed rhythm of culture at different scales, ranging from variety shows via Putin's Friendship Medal to the paragon of Geertzian statist bombast, the parade. Seated alongside Xi and Putin in Beijing was the next most important global leader in attendance, representative of a state increasingly having to choose between the jostling arbiters of global history: later-impeached South Korean President Park Geun-hye.

Yet for all these mobilizations of Friendship's textured residues, and notwithstanding the forwardism of contemporary Chinese development, postsocialist Hunchun remains a site of cross-border asynchrony. Heterochronic Friendship displays in the twenty-first century only expose the looseness of each state's grip on time. As the next chapter shows, the since-linearized wartime period offers further evidence for the importance of contingency, struggle, and unruly human sociality to assertions of temporal sovereignty in general.

CHAPTER 4

Seizing Socialist Time Sovereignty

Я все смогу, я клятвы не нарушу.
Своим дыханьем землю обогрею.
Ты только прикажи- и я не струшу,
Товарищ Время, товарищ Время!

"Товарищ" (песня из сериала 1973г. *Как закалялась сталь*)
Слова: Роберт Рождественский; Музыка: Игорь Шамо

I can do it all, I will not break my oath.
I will heat up the earth with my breath.
Simply give the order and I will not be afraid,
Comrade Time, Comrade Time!

From the song "Comrade" performed in the TV series *How the Steel Was Tempered* (1973). Lyrics: ROBERT ROZHDESTVENSKII, music: IGOR SHAMO

Beginnings of History

The twentieth century, like the idea that it was the twentieth century, arrived in Hunchun with a jolt. Early one morning in mid-July 1900 a mounted Russian Cossack regiment advanced on the town from Novokievsk (today's Kraskino—map fig. I.3).[1] Spying the invaders on this old route along which Chinese traders drove cattle east to Russian markets, a Manchu horse herder raised the alarm. Some German-made Krupp cannons installed during the 1880s in the town's west battery spat off a few shots through the dawn fog, and a hurriedly marshaled defense troop managed to kill or wound several Cossacks. But the local Qing Deputy Lieutenant-General (*fudutong*) Ying Lian and the soldiers staffing

the east battery fled on learning of the Russian advance. Undermined by these displays of cowardice, Hunchun fell soon afterwards.

The episode was novel for both sides, for it was both the Hunchun garrison's first experience of open warfare since its early-eighteenth-century foundation under Emperor Kangxi and a formational engagement for Russia's newly formed Primorskii dragoons (Avilov 2011: 125). Later, with the town under Russian control, twenty-five Cossacks under Lieutenant Colonel Valerian Bakhtygozin were honored for their role in the seizure, receiving military orders of the fourth rank (*Voennyi orden 4-i stepeni*) from the Imperial Priamur Military District authorities.[2] Russian forces would occupy the town for five years.

On a grander scale, the event also reflected Hunchun's emerging status, and that of Manchuria[3] at large, as a frontier canvas onto which multiple imperial centers were projecting expansive temporal and spatial schemes. At the dawn of what European calendars marked as a new century, the Russian advance was part of a larger "Chinese Campaign of 1900" (*Kitaiskii pokhod 1900g.*) as tsarist forces crossed the thitherto mostly peaceful Qing-Russian border, delineated forty years earlier, in several Manchurian locations. Their stated aim was to defend regional interests, notably the China Eastern Railway, which connected Vladivostok on the Pacific to western stretches of the new Trans-Siberian Railway, against the anti-colonial Righteous and Harmonious Fist (*Yihetuan*) movement. Known in European languages as the Boxer Rebellion (Rus. *Bokserskoe vosstanie*), the uprising was given the Chinese name "National disturbances of the year *gengzi*" (*gengzi guobian*), anchoring the event in the cycle of the imperial sexagenary calendar. Though particularly active in Manchuria, the Boxers were no mere local phenomenon, and their activities across northern China were countered by an eight-way imperial intervention (*baguo lianjun*) of British, French, American, and other armies. The Cossack advance was thus part of a fractal of conflicts which—if the co-occurrence of global events is more meaningful when "civilizations" interact directly (Kracauer 1969: 140)—wrenched the Qing into violent inter-imperial synchrony with other powers. *Gengzi* and 1900 ground together like interlocking but differently sized gears.

However they were perceived at the time, geotemporal collisions like this would soon spell the demise of the two empires, Qing (1911) and Russian (1917), between which the Cossacks moved. Also affecting Hunchun directly, Korea (1905–10) and Manchuria as a whole (1931–2) would be subsumed within Japan's

expanding East Asian Empire. These events only multiplied the many schemes projected over Hunchun amid what Felix Patrikeeff (2002: 81) calls a "hastily sewn patchwork of stake-claiming" by different regional regimes. The multiple names ascribed to the Boxers reflected this. From the post-Qing Chinese Republican authorities who took power in 1912 to successive centers in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Pyongyang, Seoul, Tokyo, and ultimately Beijing's new PRC government post-1949, polities of all stripes mapped expansive colonial and socialist-progressivist temporalities onto the Hunchun area over the ensuing decades. Under the Qing, Manchuria had held a particularly resonant place in imperial history and myth (Chapter 5). But for everyone else this was an edge space, and so amid multiple imperial collapses, revolutions, restorations, and modernist state schemes, Chinese, Korean, Russian, and Japanese frontiers of settlement and national experimentation overlapped here as the twentieth century gathered pace.

This chapter explores how this heterogenous situation—where a lack of sovereign control or firm borders translated into a cascade of vernacular encounters among ordinary people around Hunchun—distilled out by the mid-twentieth century into a taxonomical bordered state order. Like Hunchun's twenty-first-century frontier of capital, the decades from the 1900s to the 1940s here saw people with varied senses of movement through time engaging in asynchronous encounters across state, ethnic, and national boundaries. But distinct from today, inter-polity borders drawn in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries[4] between Qing and Russian realms, and between both empires and Korea, were only selectively meaningful. With no power center—even the Japanese-backed Manchukuo state (1932–1945), much the most coherent regime to govern here during this period—exerting full, territorially "modern" sovereignty, linear state borders were a patchily distributed ideal rather than a social fact. Similarly, ethnic and national categories lacked the classificatory rigidity that they acquired in high socialist Hunchun and retain today. Manchus, Koreans, Han Chinese, and Russians, while recognizing differences, lived scattered among one another, seeing their languages, everyday practices, and temporal imaginings collide.

Later on, the socialist states that encompassed Hunchun, which by 1949 lay neatly on the People's Republic of China's Soviet and Korean borders, would claim to have tamed this unruly situation. However, I demonstrate a forcefully grounded dimension to how progressive statehood took root here between 1900/*gengzi* and mid-century. The elaborate temporal and cultural work that sustained

cross-border socialism once each polity was consolidated was indeed effected by state apparatuses whose interventionist "sculpting" of social worlds made them, in Adeeb Khalid's (2007: 115) reading, "far *more* intrusive and oppressive than colonial empires." This should not be ignored. But at inception, a definitional role in the nascent history of socialism in several countries was played by demotic, subaltern persons familiar from other imperial formations, figures emically referred to at the time as "bandits" and "partisans"—the latter synonymous with "guerrillas." Standing outside or against political centers' incomplete efforts to establish governmental and legal institutions here early in the twentieth century, these locally rooted, and often notorious, characters embodied sociopolitical currents of an era of imperial collapse, overlapping frontiers, and emerging socialist revolution and national consciousness. Just as Hunchun's asynchronies today unfold amid haunting twentieth-century remnants, bandits and partisans operated in the end-of-history ruins of Qing, Russian, and Japanese empires. Banditry in part reflected the collapse of social and imperial order, but it also represented a kind of settler colonial outlawry whose suppression linear states would trumpet as victory against "chaotic/elemental" (Ch. *luan*; Rus. *stikhiinyi*; Kor. *ran*) premodern relics. Yet these states relied heavily on both the actions and the mythologies of Chinese, Russian, and Korean partisan fighters who actively appropriated the bandit ethos. As will become clear, figures resembling the "primitive" apolitical rebels seen by historian Eric Hobsbawm as incapable of making big-H History were less antagonists than protagonists in the socialisms that would eventually imbue spaces up to firm state borders with progressive national time.

Mythic Futures

Chinese, Russian, and Korean partisans' espousal of bandit-like ethics of robust male heroism and oneness with natural terrain embedded an inchoate frontier legacy deep in the PRC, Soviet, and DPRK histories later written here. Their struggles against Japanese, imperial Russian, Chinese Republican, and warlord forces during the 1900s to 1940s were efforts to seize both temporal and spatial sovereignty over the Hunchun area. In keeping with this book's broader concerns, the resulting bandit-partisan textures of both progressive time and national territory thus reveal statist modernity never to have been as rational or linear as it was later represented.

Discussing British colonial rule in India, Saurabh Dube describes how unruly "mythic pasts" become embedded in imperial progressive projects, from Christian conversions fragmenting into vernacular South Asian Christianities, to legal-political systems being interpreted through local customary practices. Modern conceits or "fetishes" such as "the nation," Dube argues (2004: 19), end up freighted with demotic contingencies, making modern time altogether more polyvalent than it might appear. The presence of "mythic" bandit legacies in socialist histories around Hunchun similarly unsettles common understandings of the "epistemological transformation" (Murthy and Schneider 2013: 4), which occurred as linear historical thinking arrived in East Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Tanaka 1993; Kwong 2001). Even at the urban nexuses of emergent nationalisms, new explicitly "national" histories were not universally or immediately adopted (Kuo 2013; Liu 2013). Well into China's socialist period, the novel categories, classes, and time frames of socialist sociopolitics continued to collide with existing practices and perceptions. Discerning the resistant elements that were paradoxically inherent to the edifice of state-socialist organization helps us to avoid teleological assumptions about how linearity took root here—an ironic kind of analytical collapse—and beyond this, I suggest, shows why such ideas ultimately became persuasive to new socialist citizenries.

In line with scholarly consensus that early-twentieth-century Manchurian events were key to subsequent political developments in China (Levine 1987), Soviet Russia (Stephan 1996), and the Koreas (Wada 1992; Eckert 2016), this chapter therefore reveals the importance of frontier overlaps to Hunchun people's later understandings of their place in socialist time and space. Without ignoring the force of schemes projected from intellectual and national centers, my narrative rooted earthily amid wooded hillsides and river gullies shows how the appeal of socialist modernity, and the national histories and discrete borders alloyed to it, rested on processes of mythic cultural texturing at the frayed edges of the nation. To begin delving into this, I elaborate further on the frontier context that was the arena for bandit/partisan action.

Overlapping Frontiers

Political, social, and territorial inchoateness around Hunchun at the turn of the twentieth century was produced from all sides. To the southwest, the collapse

of the Qing was followed by the founding of the Republic of China (1912–1949), which posed as a strong, modernizing polity but never really took hold in many areas amid warlord rule. Much of Manchuria was the domain of Zhang Zuolin (r. 1916–1928), who had ascended from the below-discussed ranks of local bandits, yet remote Hunchun lay beyond even his control, or that of his son and successor Zhang Xueliang (r. 1928–1936). During the 1920s to 1930s local Chinese and Korean Communist groups also sought to exert power here, yet their ideas were often at odds with policy lines favored by Party Central Committees and rarely fully succeeded (Coogan 1994).

Russian actions in the region occasionally seemed more decisive, including during the abovementioned 1900 invasion and half-decade occupation of Hunchun. Yet the empire's 1905 defeat in the Russo-Japanese War ended this and exacerbated a sweeping atmosphere of crisis and revolt mirroring China's. Life on the Manchurian frontier was increasingly uncoupled from events further west, and news of Tsar Nicholas II's February 1917 deposition in Petrograd, for example, only arrived in the region after several days because of regular breaks in the telegraph line (Pak 2013: 5). As frontier lives became detached from progressive revolutionary histories being projected in far-off cities, power was reciprocally only loosely exercised: even after the 1922 establishment of the rational-modernist Soviet Union, Russian governance in Manchuria remained a "slovenly/disorderly" (*bezalabernyi*) confusion of half-achieved fragments (Patrikeeff 2002: xiii).

Often underlying the incompleteness of Chinese warlord, Communist, or Russian control over Hunchun and its surroundings was growing Japanese influence. As colonial occupant of Korea (1905–1945), Tokyo claimed Korean settlers in Manchuria as imperial subjects, a process that intensified after the 1931 invasion of the region and establishment of the Japan-backed Manchukuo state (1932–1945). The strongest and best-equipped polity to occupy this area during this period, Manchukuo was a site for large-scale industrial, urban, and infrastructural development (including Changchun Film Studio—Chapter 3) and violent inscription of categories of national difference (Duara 2007: 227–230), which would have long material afterlives. But even its technocratic official image concealed confusion amid feuding between Manchukuo authorities, the Korea Governor General, and the Kwantung Army, all stakeholders in its running (Park 2005: 19–20). Imperial control was also limited in what to the state

were higher-"friction" spaces like that around Hunchun (Scott 2009), beyond the orderly urban enclaves of Shinkyō (Ch. Xinjing, today's Changchun), or Shenyang (Sewell 2020; map fig. I.2).

Successive ends of history at political centers thus rendered this a frontier palimpsest on which grand enterprises hatched in various metropoles were incompletely projected. The competing railway imperialisms of Russia's China Eastern Railway (CER, *KVZhD*, started 1896) and the Japan-run South Manchurian Railway (*Mantetsu*, started 1906), respectively crisscrossing northern and southern Manchuria, did exemplify linear temporality's partial arrival in the Chinese, Russian, Korean, and Japanese worlds. Yet although pushing timetabled, regimented progress along decisively straight iron threads, these railways slid along narrow corridors of sovereign territory surrounded by ungoverned plains and taiga. The fact that they changed hands several times between 1900 and the 1950s reinforced the sense of incompleteness pervading state and corporate governance (Urbansky 2008).

Local politics, society, and economics around Hunchun offered demotic expression of these colliding temporal schemes. Where demographics were concerned, Sino-Russian and Sino-Korean borders did broadly define areas of dominant Slavic, Han, and Korean settlement, but these were not strongly enforced. Moreover, Russian outliers across Manchuria and northeastern Korea, thousands of Han laborers and fortune-seekers in the Russian Far East and Korea, and an aggregating mix of Korean farmers, waves of Japanese occupiers, and a scattering of Manchus on all sides, blurred firm distinctions. Populations were also undergoing constant flux, for imperial breakdowns, revolution, and invasion on all sides saw mass migrations of "Russians" (actually often Ukrainians—known as *malorossy*),[5] Chinese (mostly from Shandong province),[6] and Koreans (mostly from Hamgyŏng province) arrive in the area between the 1880s and 1930s.

Each of these processes of settlement and colonization bore connotations of movement "outside" the bounds of familiar cultural worlds, conveyed vividly by the label *chuangguandong* ("bursting east of the pass") given to the Chinese migration in reference to the Great Wall's easternmost Shanhai gate, and the region's historic framing as *guanwai*, "outside the pass." Importantly, the biographies of all these multiethnic migrants—ancestors of today's Hunchun people—also exhibited remarkable temporal and circumstantial parallels.

Whether Russian, Chinese, or Korean, most were poor peasants fleeing famine, war, and crowded lives of indentured labor under landlords (Ukr. *pan*, Ch. *dizhu*) across Eurasia. Settling around Hunchun they found work as homesteaders, tenant farmers, ginseng/gold diggers, hunters, or—at the minority proletarian end of the spectrum—miners, foresters, or railway workers. Farmland on the Chinese side was dominated by Han owners, and mines and ginseng plantations lay in the hands of Chinese, Russian, or Japanese industrialists. Small Chinese businesses predominated in southern Primorye, Russia. Notwithstanding areas of denser settlement by one or other group, therefore, most inhabitants were in comparable socioeconomic positions and lived alongside representatives of other groups: frontier overlaps were a lived reality on the ground.

Like settler colonial processes elsewhere (Bateman and Pilkington 2011: 1-2), these migrations construed the lands into which they arrived as "unoccupied" or at least not "truly inhabited" by those preceding them, producing quickly forgotten acts of despoilment and native dispossession. Also widespread was settler fear of frontier Otherness that was both human and environmental, exacerbated by the material hardship and political, legal, and moral "outsideness" of frontier life. Yet unsettling embodiments of lawless Otherness came from among settlers themselves, for daily struggles induced many around Hunchun—in varying numbers at different times—to engage in practices referred to using numerous terms in all local languages (glossed below) as "banditry." Such figures have long loomed at the margins of Chinese, Russian, and Korean history (Antony 1989; Bobrovnikov 2000; J. S. Lee 2019), but in Manchuria during this period "bandits" acquired a legendary status, which made them central to the mythic futures being written here. These terrestrially bound figures, and the earthy Chinese, Russian, and Korean partisans who borrowed from them, were the change-producing vanguard of the era, and seeing them as a socio-ecological phenomenon is critical to understanding their later embeddedness in progressive statehood.

Bandits

Manchurian banditry, practiced by representatives of all ethnic groups, encompassed economic, social, and sometimes political activities, including theft or extortion of money, food, clothing, and weaponry from peasants, merchants, officials, or travelers, often backed up by violence or threats thereof. As suffered,

the phenomenon observed few boundaries and thus testified further to the Hunchun area's frontier overlaps, and the horrors of life courses interrupted by long migrations and pervasive unrest. With top-down governance efforts tangled up in the wooded hills around railways or mines, it was from wild spaces beyond the authorities' reach—and the fringes of settler efforts to establish a cyclical order of stable agricultural and kin reproduction—that their actions erupted. Particularly around Hunchun, Manchuria was a kind of bandit "Zomia," the non-state southeast Asian space coined by Willem van Schendel (2002).

From the perspective of both imperial state expansionists and immiserated multiethnic migrants, radical human and natural frontier alterities elided in this rooted, inscrutable figure. Emerging from forests to conduct raids or kidnappings before melting back into the taiga, bandits seemed a feature of an alien ecology. This had wider temporal dimensions, for as individuals themselves seeking to survive amid sociopolitical disorder, bandits appeared to those they encountered to live on a scrambled frontier timeline, avatars of both violent backwardness and noble savagery of anti-progress. But if encounters with oft-terrifying Otherness, even if—as I shall show—different Othernesses carried different weights depending on the participants, were de rigueur for Han, Russians, and Koreans, so too were remarkably tenacious romanticizations of bandit lives and ways. All groups mythically valorized Robin Hood–esque woodland gangs united by fraternal bonds and martial masculinity. It was this ethic that was later appropriated by leftist and anti-Japanese partisans, to whom I turn presently.

Russians and "Ethnic" Chinese Banditry

The 1900–1905 Russian occupation of Hunchun with which I began above offers a revealing entry point for considering Manchurian banditry as a multiethnic and culturally multivalent phenomenon. The tsarist forces' invasion was devastating, with key buildings including Hunchun's local governor's *yamen*, land reclamation office, telegraph bureau, and schoolhouse all burned to the ground. The garrison archives and the abovementioned Krupp cannons were also spirited away to Russia (Jin and Huang 1987: 99–100). This apparently disproportionate violence and appropriation, as well as still severer contemporaneous actions elsewhere on the border,[7] must be understood in the context of "banditry." Since the late-nineteenth century, hysteria over Chinese bandits (Rus. *khunkhuzy*)[8] had been growing in eastern Russia, and the Boxer movement, which spread

readily to Hunchun via continuing migrant flows from Shandong, where it began, was seen in this light.

Russian encounters with *khunkhuzy* were thus commonplace around Hunchun. Writing in 1914, imperial explorer Vladimir Arsenev offered a concise bandit taxonomy for southern Primorye, noting the presence of both small groups of down-and-outs (*cheliad'*) from local Chinese villages and mounted cross-border gangs (*shaiki*) sweeping through to kidnap or seize cattle before fleeing back to Manchuria (Arsenev 2004: 195–206). Arsenev's term *cheliad'*, an abstract noun implying a substance or phenomenon rather than individual people, joins an equally common Russian label—*liumpeny*—in invoking the processes of dispossession and enclosure that were inherent to colonial settlement amid imperial breakdown. Derived from the German *Lumpen* (lit. "rags") and best known in Marx's notion of the *Lumpenproletariat*[9] (a potentially reactionary constituency of laborers left idle by economic and political crisis), this epithet suggests a dim cross-cultural sense among Russians of the future importance of "outsiders" ejected by empires that were expanding demographically even as they collapsed politically. Symptomatic of the lumbering nature of partial governance, Arsenev notes, Russian authorities reacted hopelessly late to the predatory Chinese gangs. Earlier, mounted Cossack brigades (reinforced for the purpose) had pursued bandits westwards, on occasion chasing stragglers 100 versts (c. 106 km) over the permeable Chinese border. But a summer 1879 incident when quixotic Cossacks mistook several Qing regular troops for *khunkhuzy* and killed them had ended this practice. Thereafter, captives were handed over at Hunchun to any Chinese authorities who would take them, although Russians suspected that malefactors were simply released (Avilov 2011: 28–9; 156).

Suggestions that bandits enjoyed the support of Chinese officialdom, as well as the tendency among Primorye's "local" *khunkhuzy* to disperse spectrally among the houses (Rus. *fanzy*) of peaceful Chinese residents (for whom many worked informally), fed into a racializing Russian conflation of *khunkhuz* and "Chinese." Bandits were vanguards of a "yellow peril" (Rus. *zheltaia opasnost'/ugroza*), it was thought, a mass invasion from a premodern "Asiatic" country that threatened to "fall on the shoulders of all Europe," in the words of one commentator from the time (Rudokopov 1910: 923). Echoing parallel paranoias in Europe and America,[10] concerns that the *khunkhuzy* foreshadowed an effort to "reclaim" Primorye for China were glossed as the Russian Far East's "ethnic question."[11]

Any Chinese—or indeed "Asian"-looking—person perceived to be acting inimically, or merely unintelligibly, to Russians might be labeled a *khunkhuz*, the threat apparently residing in their Chineseness, and thus their difference.

Yet ethnicized anxiety around Manchurian banditry was only part of a wider set of insecurities coterminous with imperial expansion into Asia, a space that had long haunted Russian imaginations as wild, backward, and uncivilized (Tolz 2011; Zatsepine 2017). In atomized settlements surrounded by forests and non-Slavic Korean, Chinese, and indigenous populations, recent Russian arrivals confronted human and environmental Othernesses, which coalesced in the *khunkhuz* menace. Attacking unannounced from the taiga (impenetrable even now—fig. 4.1), these strangers then melted back into the woods or disappeared to an indistinctly bordered "China." In fact however, as Arsenev observes, *khunkhuzy* did not discriminate, and Primorye Chinese only sheltered these "robbers" (*razboiniki*) out of fear of their brutal reputation for tying people to trees, ripping out fingernails, breaking knuckles, cutting out tongues, and

FIGURE 4.1: Woods and taiga in southern Primorye east of Hunchun (photo by author, July 2015). Much of the terrain on all sides of the three-way border is similar (although famine-era deforestation means there are far fewer trees on the Korean side).

gouging eyes (Arsenev 2004: 197). Russians were thus not alone in feeling thrust beyond their limits by northeast Asian migration.

Mirrored Alterities

If *khunkhuzy* owed their renown to the racializing panic of uncertain imperial expansion, ignorance of their new surrounds obscured from many Russians the fact that their experiences mirrored those of their notional "Asian" antagonists. For one thing, banditry had a local history long predating Russian settlement of the 1850s to 1860s. With Manchuria having been off-limits to Han or Korean migrants for much of the Qing (1636–1911), those settling here before the late nineteenth century were commonly outlaws by definition, and led hardy lifestyles as "ginseng-/sea cucumber-poaching bandits" (*shenzei*) or "gold-mining bandits" (*jinfei*). But Korean and Han settlers fleeing Hamgyŏng and Shandong famines from the 1880s soon vastly outnumbered this modest population, and new gangs of "red-beards" (Ch. *honghuzi*, Kor. *honghoja*) proliferated. While administrative fragmentation makes figures difficult to establish, Billingsley (1988: 29–32) reports that Jilin had the largest Manchurian bandit population, with around eight thousand forming gangs several hundred-strong by the 1920s, including around Hunchun. The origin province of Shandong was itself a bandit hot spot, and as famine, civil war, and the Japanese invasion of northern China in 1937 saw bandit numbers explode (33), more migrated northeastward to Jilin and beyond to eastern Russia. Like the Boxer movement earlier, this in turn brought with it further bandit and "secret society"[12] activities.

With settlers of all kinds increasingly engaged in "hinterland industries" such as gold mining or opium farming (Lee 1983: 25), most peasant families owned guns and formed armed "village protection groups" to defend against *honghuzi.* Chinese migrants did not carry the same racializing "yellow peril" views as their Russian counterparts, although people indigenous to the region, such as Daur scholar Urgunge Onon, perceived "strange, wild-looking" opium-smoking Han bandits "an outside, foreign scourge" (Humphrey & Onon 1996: 41–3). Chinese settlers also shared with Russians the sense that bandits represented a coalescence of human and natural Othernesses, evident in the terminology applied to them. The term *honghuzi* itself, or *huzi*—"beard"—for short, has debated origins[13] but reflects historical associations in "inner" China (*neidi*) between the notionally wild people to the north (Zhao 1978: 509) and their repulsive hairiness,

a pervasive marker in Chinese constructions of ethnic difference and barbarism (Dikötter 2015: 29–30). Not necessarily bearded but distinctly alien, *honghuzi* would melt into and out of the wilds and, like many Primorye Chinese described by Arsenev, were a mix of full-time "professionals" and occasional "farming bandits" (*nongfei*), who would "go bandit" (*luocao*—literally "drop into the grass") when times were tough.

Connotations of menacing hairiness also appear in *maozi* ("hairies"), a colloquialism long applied to Russians by northeastern Han[14] and an indication that at times Shandong migrant experiences mirrored those of Russians still more closely. With Slavic settlers facing comparable economic precarity, and with eastern Russia a long-standing destination for fugitives from tsarist authority, gangs of Russian bandits (Rus. *bandity*, *razboiniki*, *grabiteli*) also roamed the taiga. Arsenev's own guide, Dersu Uzala, whose Nanai community form one of several indigenous Manchu-related groups whose presence long predated either Qing or Russian power in the region, was robbed and murdered by such figures (Pulford 2017: 539). Even among Russians, the Cossacks who spearheaded imperial expansion and supposedly protected against *khunkhuzy* were themselves viewed ambivalently as half-bandits incapable of productive labor. For Chinese settlers, all these *Efei* ("Russian bandits") were thus purveyors of an inverted "ethnic" banditry.

As bandit attacks were meted out by all on all, class distinctions, or divisions between "modernizing" imperial agents and recalcitrant settlers, sometimes became more important than ethnic difference on the frontier. Rival authorities collaborated across borders to evade bandits: in 1902 during the anti-Boxer intervention, a Chinese general approached a Russian military commissar for permission to use the China Eastern Railway to transport salary payments from Jilin City to his troops in Hunchun (Sokovnin 1903: 217). Under these circumstances, quite who was and was not a bandit was hard to fathom, an ambiguity that only added to legends of their ubiquity. This was enhanced further as Japanese imperial agents joined the fray, sparking a distinctive counterpart to Russia's racializing colonial encounters. With Japan already decades into a process of self-separation from an Asian mainland and its purportedly backward history (Tanaka 1993), and Manchuria specifically constructed as a reservoir of Japanese ethno-racial pasts (Duara 2003: 180), bandits embodied an earthy temporality that seemed increasingly exotic. Even decades before Manchukuo's

1932 foundation, Japanese expansion around Hunchun was the setting for a proliferation of lurid tales about Manchurian *bazoku* ("horse bandits," Ch. *mazei*, see Zhao 1978: 509), seen both as valiant knights (Tsuzuki 1974) and as murky figures from frontier spaces inhabited by Tatars, Jurchens, and Mongols (Watanabe 1964; Kuchiki 1981).

Yet the imperial bandit encounter did not always unfold so neatly along either ethnic or temporal lines, for these figures framed as retrograde outlaws were also recruited to fight colonial wars. Even relatively organized regional conflicts were waged by entire armies of bandits, who offered raiding skills and local knowledge to adversaries in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), the Russian Civil War (1917–1922), the Chinese Civil War (1927–1950), and the armies of Zhang Zuolin or Japanese occupants (Landis 2008; Yaqin Li 2012). Bandit involvement in these conflicts, to which I return below, is important for our theoretical understanding of their activities, for willingness to serve power groups set these frontier figures somewhat apart from the "social bandits" theorized by Eric Hobsbawm (1972). Hobsbawm's social bandit operates beyond the laws of superordinate groups, justly defending the rural masses and possessing "no ideas other than those of the peasantry" (17). As Manchurian bandits sold their services to diverse paymasters with little sympathy for Chinese, Korean, or Russian migrants, they often more closely resembled the figures described in a prominent contestation of Hobsbawm by anthropologist Anton Blok. Drawing on work in Sicily, Blok (1972) sees bandits seeking mainly their own benefit and "political protection," collaborating with powerful groups and, rather than standing up for the peasantry, "quite often terroris[ing] those from whose very ranks they managed to rise, and thus help[ing] to suppress them" (496). Manchurian settlers at the time recognized this and, in line with views that bandits were "strong-armed, recalcitrant, antisocial individuals engaged in a futile personal vendetta against all and sundry" (Billingsley 1988: 9), liberally deployed the "bandit" label to discredit enemies or rivals, regardless of nationality, level of organization, or agenda.

However, for all that pejorative and homogenizing characterizations are understandable—people indiscriminately stealing, kidnapping, and gouging invite little empathy—it is important that "outlawry" only makes conceptual sense if established codes exist to govern conduct within a society. As already noted, the inchoate situation around Hunchun offered little such "legality," to

the point that “frontier banditry” was an institutionalized social form in its own right (Lattimore 1932: 225). As Chinese, Russian, and Korean settlers sought survival amid coterminous breakdowns in political and social order, and in all sense of where history was going, many were mere foot soldiers in a justice-free war of all against all. Life “outside” habitual social worlds made outlawry a continuum rather than a binary, making bandits hard to characterize so negatively. Indeed, even among those threatened by them, negative views were far from universal, for while living up to Blok’s predatory characterization in reality, bandits around early-twentieth-century Hunchun were in fact equally often idealized in a fashion closer to Hobsbawm’s vision. Akin to colonial notions of the “noble savage,” condemnations of bandits as both dangerous and barbaric operated hand in hand with romantically valorizing views. Both characterizations connoted temporal backwardness, but the latter was an altogether more positive “myth.”

Romance and the Greenwood

The romanticization of fearsomely strange bandits is key to understanding their legacy in later events. *Both* the actual predations of ignoble Blokian figures *and* the Hobsbawmian vision of *honghuzi* as noble, Robin Hood–esque heroes were appropriated by Communist guerillas whose vanguardist temporal struggles became rooted in rough bandit terrain. Hobsbawm’s interest in the mythologization of banditry in many global cultures derives from his view that even if they are not History’s protagonists, bandits’ closeness to the peasantry may mean that at “great apocalyptic moments . . . they become soldiers of the revolution” (1972: 29). But as important as the revolutionary potential of Manchurian bandits—a subject discussed locally at the time—was the fact that myths around them were bound up with the quasi-ecological alterities they embodied.

Valorizing visions of bandits among settlers from China, Russia, and Korea (where Chinese classical tales were familiar) often drew on literary tropes. In the Chinese tradition, as Pang Zengyu observes, romanticization of bandit lifestyles owed much to Shi Naian’s 1592 novel *Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan*) and the “Peach Garden Oath” (*taoyuan jieyi*) episode in another classic, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*San guo yanyi*). The “vigorous and brave feats” (Pang 1995: 120) of *Water Margin*’s 108 outlaw protagonists encode a cocktail of companionship, righteousness, and a preference for death over seeing injustices perpetrated on one’s fellows. Embodying what Hobsbawm calls the “greenwood ethic,” these

figures whom Pang refers to as "greenwood heroes [*lülin haojie*]" lurk in forest hideouts up Shandong's Mount Liang (map fig. I.2), addressing one another in masculinizing fashion as *haohan* ("real man") and dismissing rival, ignoble bandits as *tufei* ("dirt robber"). Such tropes pervaded China (*Water Margin* is set in Shandong and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* on the Central Plains), but Manchurian bandit cosmology was especially rich. The "horse bandit" (*bazoku*/*mazei*) made legendary in Japanese imperial ethnology mythologically rode vast distances, slept on horseback, and could fire arrows with both hands. As postimperial successor to the mounted Manchu bannermen who were former protagonists of Qing History (Chapter 5), the horse bandit similarly possessed a martial (*wu*) male Otherness contrasting with scholarly (*wen*) Confucian masculinity.

Russian and Slavic folklore too had for centuries been populated by personages like the "fine young lad" (*molodets*) and Cossack bandit-heroes bearing many *haohan* traits. Literary examples from the same period as *Water Margin* saw Tsar Ivan the Terrible figure in fictionalized encounters with the celebrated *molodets* in song cycles and poems (Perrie 2002: 234–8). Elsewhere in the Slavic world tales of Bulgarian and Ukrainian *hajduks* or *haidamaks* and Russian *razboiniki* (a word commonly associated with Cossacks) engaged in martial heroics at the Russian Empire's mountainous Muslim/Christian fringes. Expanding frontiers were theaters for the emergence of the noble Cossack bandit-hero, who, echoing the *haohan-tufei* distinction above, was juxtaposed with the dastardly "bandit-robber," generally representative of the adversary Ottoman Turks, Circassians, or Chechens.[15] Indeed, just as most of the Hunchun frontier's Chinese residents came from bandit-dense Shandong, its Russian empire transplants originated from precisely the *haidamak* homelands of Ukraine and southeastern Europe. Such trans-Eurasian echoes were not lost on contemporary observers, and one China-based Russian publicist wrote of the Boxers, "They are not robbers or madmen, but an uprising of armed patriots. They are like the renowned khunkhuzy who in turn are the same as the malorossy haidamaks or the Serb *hajduks* of the past" (quoted in Datsyshen 2001: 17).

Admiration for the greenwood ethic even extended to interethnic praise for bandit *noblesse*, at least in the Russian-to-Chinese direction. In 1906 Arsenev sojourned with a Chinese hunting band led by Chan Gichin,[16] a fugitive from Manchu authority, who embodied a blend of earnestness (*ser'eznost'*), warm-heartedness (*dobrodushie*), good sense (*rassuditel'nost'*), conviction

(*nastoichivost'*), and high brotherly morals, notwithstanding bouts of violence (Arsenev 2004: 199). These attributes echoed many of those Arsenev ascribed elsewhere to the Nanai and other dignified natives he met in the taiga. Similarly, coal prospector N. Rudokopov (1910: 927) wrote sympathetically of *khunkhuzy* near his mines who faded in and out of the trees, appearing "just as mysterious as the magnificent and mighty Manchurian forest." Such visions of bandit-heroes' ecological embeddedness reproduced European colonial projections of "close to nature" indigenous peoples, but with "civilizational" thinking common to all sides in some form (Harrell 1995), they also pervaded Chinese and Korean perspectives. Life as a heroic *haohan* was widely associated with the *jianghu*, a term literally meaning "rivers and lakes," and an environmental metaphor for the murky underworld of primordial valor, which later became the backdrop for thousands of Chinese *wuxia* (martial arts) novels. Other Sinitic terminology speaking of bandit terroir includes *shanlin* (lit. "mountain and forest"), *caokou* ("grass bandit"), and even the derogatory *tufei* whose *tu* earthiness socialist modernizers would seek to replace with oceanic (*yang*) sophistication (Chapter 3). Multiethnic migration to the wooded Hunchun frontier thus furnished evocative landscapes for apparitions of anti-authoritarian bandit-heroism even if nobility was, for now, indicative of being outside the expansive History of the polity.

Hints at how bandit wildness would soon be harnessed for progressive ends, however, emerge on returning a final time to Russia's 1900 intervention. Being an important garrison, Hunchun was one of few Chinese border locations where the Russian advance met significant resistance, yet it was not a Boxer group that fought back but a formation known as the "Loyal and Righteous Army" (*Zhongyijun*) led by Liu Yonghe. Born into a Shandong migrant hunting family, Liu received the nickname "Bullet" (*danzi*) early in life for his rifle skills and learned to navigate much of the era's multivalence around bandit identity and labeling. Later PRC accounts[17] note that after being persecuted by Qing officials, the young Liu hid in the greenwood (*lülin*) around Hunchun before creeping into Russian territory at the first signs of the 1900 Cossack invasion. Near Vladivostok he then assembled a fighting band from among local Chinese workers, who sabotaged military facilities and storehouses before reentering China, appropriating resources from local landlords and conducting anti-Russian raids from forest encampments. Outside PRC historiography Liu's anti-Russianism is disputed

(Zhao 1978: 512–13), but for Hunchun's mythic History he features in the pantheon of unwitting proto-heroes of Chinese Communism. With their purported "sense of justice" (*zhengyigan*) and ornery desire for independence (rejecting both Boxer and Qing authority), he and his peasant, hunter, miner, and woodsman *Zhongyijun* (which shares its *yi* 義—"righteous"—with *Yihetuan*) are cast as quintessential Manchurian bandit-heroes. Improbably, but equally importantly given later geographical changes, he is also said to have fought under the slogan "Defend against the Russian crown, restore national territory [*guotu*]!"

Liu's case shows how romanticizations of the Manchurian outlaw made vilifying one's enemies as bandits a double-edged sword. Real bandit careers rarely lived up to dreams of swashbuckling masculine adventure. But later efforts by leftist partisan movements to appropriate the myth demonstrated its power. As ends of imperial history and revolutionary cataclysms forced Hunchun frontierspeople to engage more and more with bandit terrain and practices, partisans increasingly drew on the bandit inheritance. Seeing how their activities were in turn elevated within "big-H" national Histories (Duara 1996) allows us to reappraise state- and border-making in Manchuria. For all their steely progressivism, newly emerging Chinese, Soviet, and Korean socialist states relied not on the pacification of premodern ethics of unruly raiding or frontier masculinity but on their mythic nationalization.

Partisans

Frontier overlaps meant that the major conflicts during which Chinese, Russian, and Korean fighters harnessed the bandit ethic were intertwined. As local theaters of the Russian (1918–1922) and Chinese (1927–1950) Civil Wars and resistance to foreign—especially Japanese—incursions[18] unfolded around Hunchun early in the twentieth century, each nationally inflected leftist struggle was enmeshed with the bandit world in practical and conceptual ways: while actual partisan activity unfolded in the above-described "greenwood," the "bandit" label was often discursively deployed to discredit enemies. Political debates also roiled over where bandits fit into revolutionary struggle. But key to my account here of how the Manchurian palimpsest distilled out into distinct sectors of bounded USSR, PRC, and DPRK territory between 1900 and 1949 is the later glorification of partisans as everyday vanguards of these progressivist states: their

embodiment of bandit-hero ethics of fraternal loyalty, justice, and, crucially, the elision of these with their surroundings gave new national Histories a kind of mythical plausibility for people in Hunchun. This applied to both temporal progress and interstate borders, since the partisan contribution to socialist prehistories had a powerful spatial dimension: as the expansive frontier (Ch. *bianjiang*) was riven with military fronts (*jiangchang*),[19] land around Hunchun was recast from being the anarchic terrain of bandit barbarity to the organized territory of Soviet, PRC, and DPRK geopolitics.

Documenting this process offers a grounded account of how the categories and frames of revolutionary sociopolitics acquired meaning for socialist citizens at large. Historians of twentieth-century China, the USSR, and Korea have shown how novel forms of historical and class consciousness were promoted top-down by modernizing governments before and under socialism. From early-twentieth-century intellectual projects to "make history speak" by reframing the Chinese past (Anagnost 1997), to the CCP's promulgation of entire "scripts" for reform in the countryside (DeMare 2019) and class war in the cities (G. Yang 2016), visions for a new social and temporal order became popularly meaningful in narrative and embodied ways. But my bottom-up dissection of these ambitious revolutionary projects demonstrates further nonlinear aspects to how previously nonexistent public subjectivities come into being. Where Chinese, Soviet, and Korean worlds geographically and socially overlapped, there was a key spatial dimension to new framings of self and Other. If modern ideas such as "the people" were actually primordial categories repurposed and reinvigorated under socialism (Anagnost 1997: 11), then here bordered state territories, and the linear presents and futures unfolding within them, would have the unruly frontier legacy at their core. As Hunchun and Manchuria became trifurcated into national spaces, bandit places and practices were recast as partisan ones through both lived human experiences and their narrativization. These processes emerge in the Russian, Chinese, and Korean cases from sources variously considered history, biography, or fiction but in fact, as I show, difficult to separate along these lines.

Primorye's Palimpsest Partisanry

As the Red Army advanced slowly eastwards from European Russia over the five years following the 1917 October Revolution, a host of small-scale, leftist-led

conflicts erupted to Hunchun's east. Inspired by the Bolshevik seizure of power and often responding to efforts by "White" tsarist forces to recruit them against the "Reds," Russian partisans began gathering in earnest in summer-autumn 1918. Following a brief seizure of Vladivostok by leftist returnees from China,[20] rapidly quashed by a Japanese- and US-led military intervention,[21] fighters withdrew into Primorye's wilder terrain. Most were members of the local rural migrant populace, and were thus poised to engage in the irregular and earthy "telluric" activities that are tenets of partisan warfare. Scholars of twentieth-century partisanry have argued that on a global scale, the guerrilla combat advocated by Lenin, Mao, and others transformed Cold War geopolitics, disrupting the entire European-imposed system of nation-states through its lack of respect for borders, law, and regular rules of engagement (Toscano 2008: 421).[22] But unlike the western theaters of WWI or European imperial territory, Hunchun's inchoate frontier of only partially meaningful borders did not—as discussed—present much order to disrupt. Indeed, contrary to existing theories, the activities of partisans bound to land and community, characteristics of Hobsbawmian bandits, would later be integral to organized statehood around Hunchun.

The woodland theater in which partisan struggle unfolded evoked the tangled frontier histories which would be repurposed here. The toponyms of southern Primorskaia oblast' formed a palimsestuous mélange of East Slavic and Sinitic, which, although reflecting the layered experiences of successive colonists rather than a starker settler/indigenous distinction, inscribed telluric folk histories like the Apache places discussed from the southwestern United States by Keith Basso (1996). Ukrainian transplants had named their settlements Novokievsk ("New Kiev"), Chuguevka (after Chuhuiv, eastern Ukraine), Khmelnitskaia (after Khmelnytskyi, western Ukraine), and Kievka, among other diminutive memorials to pasts at the opposite end of Russian imperial space.[23] By contrast, Primorye's natural features bore the nomenclature of the mostly Han taiga-exploiting *shenzei* "ginseng bandits." Early partisan resistance thus occurred in districts named both Khmelnitskaia and Tsimukhe (Ch. *Qimuhe*, "willow river"). March 1919 recruitment in the Tadushi valley (*Dazuoshu*, "large oak") by forces loyal to Admiral Kolchak, the strongest anti-Bolshevik bulwark in Siberia, saw residents of Tetiukhe (*Yezhuhe*, "wild boar valley") help locals seize the village of Olga (map fig. I.3). But having suffered a *khunkhuz* raid in 1916, Olga's telegraph office workers were steeled against attack and managed to relay news of

the uprising to Vladivostok, drawing a response from White troops, who forced the partisans to retreat into the woods. Their headquarters were moved to Chufanka, a nearby Korean farmstead (Nazarova 2013: 108–111). By 1919 partisan activities were concentrated along the railway to the coal mining settlement of Suchan (Ch. *Sucheng*). Led by Sergei Lazo (later a Bolshevik hero after being arrested by the Japanese in 1920 and killed by Cossacks who forced him into a running locomotive engine), the Olga partisans ambushed the mines' White and interventionist guards at railway stations including Chinese-derived Fanza and Sitsa.

Also joining the 1919 Suchan raid were Korean partisans led by Han Ch'angkŏl from Sinengou, a village founded in 1868 by migrant Hamgyŏng peasants. Such groups were heterogeneous: although generally well marshaled leftists, some Koreans backed Socialist Revolutionary forces while others variously prioritized struggles against the Whites, the foreign intervention, and the bigger target of Japan's stifling occupation of Korea (Naumov 1992). Some were prepared to fight leaders with Japanese ties (e.g. Siberian White ataman Semenov), but not Kolchak, and disagreed over allegiance with Russian groups (Stephan 1996: 136). These internal distinctions further attest to the practical and conceptual entanglement of partisanry with banditry. As John Stephan estimates (136), over fifty thousand "partisans" in two hundred groups roamed the Russian Far East by 1919, including those who resented Bolshevik interference in their affairs or merely "called themselves partisans . . . to confer a patina of legitimacy on plunder."

As well as resulting from divergent political goals, this diffusion mirrored the abovementioned fragmentation of local governance. Before and after the 1920 collapse of Kolchak's Siberian regime and the establishment of the Far Eastern Republic (*Dal'nevostochnaia respublika*) as a buffer between Soviet and Japanese interests, dozens of local "governments" of all stripes rose and fell. After periodic assaults from Russian, Korean, Chinese, and Magyar partisans (Borbat 2015: 10–11), Vladivostok finally succumbed to the Bolsheviks in October 1922, but revolutionary newspapers candidly acknowledged that this was hardly the binary Red-over-White victory that Soviet historiography would later proclaim. As the *Uralskii rabochii* reported on October 28, 1922, the city had seen "changes of government almost every week [and] lacked the hallmarks of real 'statehood' [*gosudarstvennost'*]" (Pak 2013: 299).

Partisanry was also entangled with banditry because, ironically, both Reds and Whites employed local Chinese "illegal workers" (*chernorabochie*), "smugglers" (*kontrabandisty*), the abovementioned *liumpeny* and *khunkhuzy*. For the Bolsheviks, proletarian populations like the Shandong miners, who made up over 1,000 of the 1,633 workers at the Tetiukhe lead and silver pits (Kolesnikov 2008),[24] were targets for revolutionary agitation, while in 1921 Primorye activists dispatched Russophone Chinese agitator Xin Diu to Jilin to recruit among Zhang Zuolin's former-*khunkhuz* soldiery. Partly because of language difficulties, however, neither side was very successful in attracting Chinese fighters (Zalesskaia 2006: 74–75).[25]

Under these circumstances labeling adversaries "bandits" was no great conceptual leap. While White commanders warned of "being torn apart by Red bandits," Bolsheviks declaimed their foes as "White bandits," and Han's Koreans fought enemies comprising "Japanese, Americans, *khunkhuzy*, and Kolchak forces" (Pak 2013: 159; 234; 286–7). Bandit-labeling was common elsewhere in the Russian Civil War, where it was "a weapon in the arsenal of political rhetoricians" (Landis 2008: 119), but the epithet resonated especially here given Manchurian outlawry's omnipresence. In what one Olga partisan memoir called a *smutnoe vremia*—"confused/foggy/troubled era" (Nazarova 2013: 110)—bandit-definition was also part of a process of forging a single moral-Historic storyline out of a situation in which there was no established order. As an insurgent force, the Bolsheviks were engaged in both semiotic and kinetic warfare and, like Bullet Liu's army invoking *yi* "righteousness," sought to associate their cause with visions of universalizing justice. Even while raiding and lurking in woods, this meant moving beyond the timeless nobility of bandit-heroism to seize authorship of a new progressive mythology, and so labeling enemies "bandits" painted them as regressive elements impeding the rush toward a just future.

While not being an act of indigenous refusal of "settler time," this struggle among colonists and imperial authorities had features of the temporal tussle described by Mark Rifkin (2017—see Introduction), as partisans selectively mobilized the "outlaw" ethic against the imposed "now" of lumpenizing empire. Victory on both spatial and temporal fronts would exact dispossession in the opposite direction, as opponents of the new order were "reduced to banditry" in the words of Bolshevik newspapers (Pak 2013: 299). Subsequent Soviet accounts portray the Red advance on Primorye as an unstoppable campaign against

Whites, who, like the *khunkhuzy* before them, are dismissed as a single substitutable mass of counterrevolutionary thugs and ridiculous foreigners, from the interventionist "kind American uncles" (Shishkin 1957: 75) to British forces who blundered into the conflict appealing to their "Russian friends." Yet if turning royalists into "bandits" was half the task of forging this hilly, forested region into a realm of Soviet power, what Yael Navaro calls a "make-believe space" of the state (Navaro-Yashin 2012: 5), the second stage, which involved both political "believing" and material "making," was a more complex affair.

The alien terrain of temporally recalcitrant bandits became the national territory of progressive consciousness because partisan warfare occurred in bandit haunts using bandit methods. Sabotaging infrastructure, plying the littoral in hijacked vessels, appropriating enemy weaponry, and relying on knowledge of locale (Rus. *mestnost'*) to outmaneuver clumsier—alien—enemies (Borbat 2015: 45–46, 59–63) were all partisan mainstays. Such tactics placed fighters in a temporal suspension befitting both the era's moral-political ambiguities and the timelessness of frontier terrain. Discussing the distended time frame of guerrilla struggle in relation to Mao Zedong's 1938 essay *On Protracted Warfare*, Tani Barlow describes "protraction" as "a temporality that exists within an uneven spatiality composed of different topographies, resources, populations, and shifting real conditions" (2019: 240). Enduring these shifts through arduous periods of communion with the taiga, recent Ukrainian, Korean, and Russian migrants developed telluric bonds in ways impossible for urban White elites and oafish foreigners. One partisan commander, V. E. Serzhant, described days of skulking in sodden woods before an August 1919 ambush on the Tetiukhe railway: "We ate nothing, got soaked and froze to our bones since we could not set an open flame." After the attack Serzhant's men were pursued deep into the taiga (*v glukhuiu taigu*) (Borbat 2015: 45–7). Similarly, when Japanese soldiers attacked a hideout in Vladimiro-Monomakhovo near Tetiukhe (map fig. I.3), local partisans "returned through the taiga and along the coast to [their] native places [*rodnye mesta*]" (67). After their assault on Suchan, Lazo and his forces "scattered throughout the taiga and hills" (Shishkin 1957).

As a result of these entanglements, the conflict's moral and military ambiguities amid "foggy times" and imperial collapse were written into a new linear history of place to Hunchun's east. Wartime experiences in Suchan, Olga, Tetiukhe, Tadushi, Tsimukhe, and Sinengou became the heroic Histories of Ukrainians,

Russians, Chinese, and Koreans who would now be Soviet Far Easterners. The "valleys and hillocks" (Rus. *doliny i vzgor'ia*) eulogized in Petr Pafenov's 1922 song "March of the Far Eastern Partisans" (Dushenko 2016), a frontier whose toponyms attested to layered Ukrainian/Chinese arrivals, entered a new national cosmology. Later rifts in the cosmos between the USSR and PRC would make the lodging of Soviet myth in Chinese-named places unacceptable, and prompt a still-deeper inscription of partisanry into the landscape. But before that, parallel processes would be wrought by Chinese and Korean fighters nearby.

Sino-Korean Osmosis

To approach the guerilla campaigns of the Chinese Civil War, Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), and Korean independence struggles (1905–1945) which were intertwined around Hunchun, we follow the White Russians who fled Primorye after the 1922 Bolshevik victory. Many escaped to China and Korea aided by Japanese forces who had occupied Novokievsk, Slaviansk, and Posyot (map fig. I.3), limping by sea to the Korean port of Wŏnsan (Gattenberger 1974; fig. I.2) or overland to Hunchun, where two thousand regrouped before moving further into China (Luchsheva 2006: 25–6). The total of thirty thousand Russian refugees who entered China following the Civil War were as motley as Bolshevik mockery suggested, and many subsequently traced meshwork routes across Asia, often stateless,[26] nonlinear emissaries of the disintegrating Manchurian "patchwork."

The Hunchun where the White refugees gathered in 1922 was especially frayed. Late-Qing reforms to schooling and trade here and empire-wide had not prevented dynastic collapse in 1911, although Hunchun had felt pre-tremors of this shuddering end of history. Japan's annexation of Korea made trans-Tumen Korean migrants—by then two-thirds of the population of "Kando" (Ch. *Jiandao*), as the area around Hunchun was known in Korean—potential "Japanese" subjects in the eyes of ethnically minded imperial authorities (Song 2018: 143–152). A 1909 Qing-Japan Kando Convention affirmed the area as Chinese territory but permitted the 1910 opening of a Hunchun Japanese consulate, deepening what Hyun Ok Park (2005: 96) terms Japan's "osmotic expansion" into local politics and markets.

As Nianshen Song (2018: 149–151) has shown, Kando served as a "prototype" for many Japanese colonial projects. Techniques of high modernist statism,

from administrative reforms to population and land surveys, and experiments in agriculture, education, and health, were piloted here before being implemented in Korea and across Manchukuo. As Alyssa Park (2019) has shown, the entire notion of sovereignty was itself part of this Tumen region experiment. All this unfolded under the aegis of draconian military and police surveillance, and by-now-familiar anti-"bandit" operations. Growing political and economic interests provided a pretext for the "defense" of Japanese and Korean property, and the threats of *bazoku* and defectors from Zhang Zuolin's army were invoked to justify increasingly martial interventions: by 1917 Japanese troops were permanently stationed in Hunchun (Park 2005: 388–9). Yet those whom it became most expedient to label bandits were anti-Japanese Korean partisans, thousands of whom operated here with varying allegiances to the official Korean Independence Army (Kor. *Taehan tongnip-gun*), Northern Military Administration Office (*Pungnogun jŏngsŏ*), and the Shanghai-based Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea (*Taehanmin'guk imsi chŏngbu*).[27] These nationalist opponents to Japanese domination in turn sought to wrest time sovereignty from Empire's imposed progressivism and modernist experiments.

Around the conflagration in Korea and Kando of 1919's anti-colonial March First Movement (*Sam-il undong*), Japanese forces made significant losses against "bandit" armies at Pongo-dong and Chŏngsan-ri near Hunchun (map fig. I.3). Soon after, the controversial October 1920 "Hunchun Incident" (*Hunch'un sagŏn*)—still considered a false flag operation by DPRK (Paekkwa Sajŏn 2014) and Yanbian (C. Piao 1990: 57) historians—saw "bandits" (*majŏk*) burn down Hunchun's Japanese consulate, loot shops, and kill consular police. In response twenty thousand Japanese troops were dispatched to Kando, executing over six thousand Korean civilians. Demonstrating continuing trans-frontier resonances, this extreme reaction, coinciding with the Primorye crackdown that captured Bolshevik Sergei Lazo, might have been displaced revenge for a March 1920 Russian partisan assault on Japan's consulate at Nikolaevsk-on-Amur (Esselstrom 2009: 74).

But as Soviet place-making accelerated east of Hunchun with the 1922 foundation of the USSR, meshes knitting the frontier together were severed. Vladivostok, thitherto a free port, was reassigned for military purposes, substantially affecting trade from Hunchun (Li S. 1991: 348–9). Zhang Xueliang's 1929 attempt to seize the China Eastern Railway also accelerated division as Soviet and Chinese border patrols were increased (404–7). Such developments, and the loose

grip of Zhang and the Nanjing-based Republican authorities, facilitated further influxes of Japanese business, whose trade in everything from soybeans and radishes to tiger and bear pelts was by 1931 worth over forty times flows to either Russia or elsewhere in Jilin (348–9). Hunchun's existing enfoldment within Japanese military, commercial, and diplomatic logics thus made Tokyo's full September 18, 1931 invasion of Manchuria a quantitative rather than a qualitative change locally. But this and the 1932 establishment of the Manchukuo state under what Prasenjit Duara (2007) calls Japan's institutionalist "imperialism of 'free nations'" also brought more Koreans to the area and decisively redirected the life courses of ordinary Shandong and Hamgyŏng settlers. In an opaque era of dynastic collapse and occupation, their experiences would, like those of their Soviet contemporaries, transform bandit terrain into territory of revolutionary partisan heroism.

Blurred Lines

As earlier in Primorye, the entanglement of bandit and partisan worlds was a matter of both action and narrative. The ubiquity of Chinese Manchurian bandits, whose estimated numbers trebled to 58,000 between 1924 and 1929, made them a practical and ideological concern for all sides. For the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and their 1927-established Manchurian Provincial Committee, policy vacillated throughout the 1920s and 1930s between total discouragement of bandit cooperation and rallying a movement of "workers, bandits [*honghuzi*], farmers and soldiers" (C. Lee 1983: 24–6). While Mao Zedong—a student of *Water Margin*, which he often carried with him—saw bandits' revolutionary potential (Schram 1971: 126), the Soviet-backed Comintern feared that Communist associations with chaotic Manchurian banditry would provoke another Japanese intervention into the nascent USSR (C. Lee 1983: 73–86). These distinctive revolutionary approaches earthily presaged later contrasts between Soviet industrial progressivism and rurally oriented Maoist "Leaping." Consequently, CCP organization bore the usual regional hallmark of fog and confusion, a trend further magnified by divisions among Han and Korean Communists (C. Lee 1966). Amid rampant competitive bandit-labeling, Japanese forces feared "control of other bandit groups by the Communist bandits [Ja. *kyōsanhi*]" (245) and launched campaigns known as "wipe out bandits using bandits" (Kor. *ibijŏngbi*) (Kim 1999: 7–1: 131).[28]

Literary sources, penned both at the time and later, demonstrate the elision of the *haohan* bandit-hero and the revolutionary partisan. In one PRC-era morality tale entitled *Guerillas Seize Cattle in a Night Raid on the Pasture* (*Youjidui yexi muchang duo huangniu*) set in spring 1932, a band of Communist Youth League members appropriates several dozen cows from Han Shasan, a local "tyrant landlord" (*eba dizhu*) and "running dog" (*zougou*) of Japanese imperialism. Confronted by Han's hired hands, the nimble, virtuous raiders politely inform them that the cows are "traitors' property" and must be taken (Li D. 1985: 31–2). Like the above stories about Bullet Liu, these accounts exaggerate their protagonists' national consciousness and inflate CCP involvement. But read alongside more expansive texts from the time, they exemplify guerilla-bandit entanglements and the temporal suspension of both in wild frontier terrain.

Here I draw on two works, Han author Luo Binji's 1936 Hunchun-based novel *On the Borderline* (*Bianchuixian shang*) and later-DPRK President Kim Il Sung's swashbuckling auto-hagiography *With the Century* (*Segiwa Tŏburŏ*). Although formally falling into different genres, both books lie somewhere between revolutionary fiction and autobiography, and thus serve as rich ethnographic sources if studied through the anthro-literary lens developed by Richard Handler and Daniel Segal (1990) in work on Jane Austen. Neither Luo's nor Kim's text eschews hyperbole or schematic friend/enemy representations, but their (however fictionalized) accounts of revolutionary lives are revealing of "the (often conflicting) cultural principles that structure the negotiation of social life" (155). Most importantly, since Luo is among a widely read and taught group of northeastern Chinese anti-Japanese wartime authors, and *With the Century*—written, as Sonia Ryang (2021: 139) notes, in a "heavily classical and old fashioned manner" befitting a religious text—has been DPRK classroom gospel since the 1990s, each not only describes but also constitutes the actually existing History of their later-formed respective states. They can therefore be understood to reflect both data and analysis in the making and believing of national space in Manchuria. Through guerilla warfare Shandong and Hamgyŏng settlers forged new telluric bonds to land and blood brotherly ties with each other, ushering in a new kind of time.

On the Borderline follows Liu Qiang, the son of Hunchun Han migrant-landowner Liu Lin, and perhaps the hero Luo Binji wishes he had become.[29] Like Luo's own father, Liu Lin has arrived from Shandong and employs Korean tenant farmers in Hunchun's wooded outskirts. As Hunchun is crushed by Manchukuo

colonialism and Japanese market domination bankrupts local merchants, Liu Qiang joins a guerilla force which, alongside bands of Korean Communist partisans (*Gaoli hongdang*, the "Korean Reds"), lurks in the woods near the Russian and Korean borders. Liu Lin opposes armed struggle against the Japanese and is distressed by his son's disappearance (intergenerational discord is a key theme). However, harassed by the occupying authorities who wish to seize his farmland for an airfield, Liu Sr. is driven to an early grave. The narrative then shifts to follow his fellow Shandong migrants—sympathetically portrayed throughout—who, after laboring on a new Japanese railway into Korea, flee to join Liu Qiang in the woods. Led by Liu and a man named Pockmarked Wang (*Wang si mazi*), a smuggler of Chinese opium to Vladivostok, the group meanders through forests and along ridges pursued by Japanese forces, dispersing to find food and conduct reconnaissance.

The protagonists encounter both a drunken Soviet border guard and guerillas from the "National Salvation Army" (*jiuguojun*), among whom there swirls grim evidence of harsh wartime justice (an older Shandong man is executed for stealing some legwarmers) and inter-partisan division (a Korean guerilla is imprisoned and abused). Appalled by this, Liu Qiang makes a powerful speech, persuading his comrades of the righteousness of their cause and saying Han fighters should ally with oppressed Koreans. The closing stages of the novel are tense as the guerillas endure the protracted uncertainty of situational combat and mourn long-departed Shandong homes. With the Japanese closing in, Liu Qiang takes refuge with some comrades near the Soviet-Chinese-Korean triple border and suddenly, in the novel's final scene, spies a red flag approaching over a hill: the much-desired link-up with the Koreans is on. "They've come!" he cries, and bounds off into combat.

Throughout the novel, the Shandong settlers struggle to avoid succumbing to banditry, engaging in the same semiotic struggle pitting righteousness (*yi*) against brigandry (*fei*) waged by the Bolsheviks above. On one occasion Wang and another guerilla named Kao Shan debate raiding local farms for supplies:

> "Hopefully we'll be sent legwarmers and coal soon . . . we must not raid . . . we are not bandits [*huzi*]," says Wang.

"What if we are huzi? The huzi are also fighting the Japanese," Kao replies, before Liu Qiang intervenes:

"We are not huzi, we will do what we must to fight. . . . You're cold? Everyone's cold; you're hungry? Everyone's hungry." (Luo [1936] 1984: 151–2)

Similar blurring pervades *With the Century*, where Kim Il Sung observes Manchurian village defense forces becoming "bandits" (*t'obi*) amid hardship. Japanese propaganda about "Communist bandits" (*kongbi*), he reports, also makes it hard "to distinguish righteous rebels [*ŭijŏk*] from bandits [*majŏk*]" (1999: 3–2, 156). The *ŭi* of *ŭijŏk*, a label under which many Korean resistance armies fought, is the Korean pronunciation of the Sinograph *yi*. One day in 1935 Kim reports entering a Han village north of Yanji only to have the entire population flee screaming about *honghoja* (the Korean rendering of *honghuzi*). In a far-fetched scene, he and his men resolve the situation by pitching camp in nearby woods and then, with Kim playing a foot organ, striking up a lusty rendition of the Chinese folk song "Su Wu Tends Sheep" (*Su Wu muyang*) in the local schoolyard. The villagers, Kim reports, thereby realize that "the 'Koryŏ[30] Red Army' [*Koryŏ honggun*] is not a gang of bandits [*pijŏk*]" (4–2, 188–191). Echoing Liu Qiang above, Kim must repeatedly deny intentions of plunder and explain, "I am Kim Il Sung, we are not bandits." Confusion may be arising, he speculates with exasperation, from the literal "red-beard" meaning of *honghuzi* and the association of red with Communism (4–2, 198–9).

Guerillas, like the bandits with whom they are confused, are at one with wild terrain. Luo's novel opens with men emerging "dimly" (*heiyouyoude*) through mist along the Russian border, their voices "harsh as frost, sharp as hailstones," blending with climate and landscape (1984: 3). *With the Century*'s chapter titles evoke a "Snowstorm in the Tianqiaoling Mountains," "Mount Paektu Secret Camp," and "The Forest of Nanpaizi." Yet while naturally impenetrable, this terrain remains politically permeable by agile partisans, and Kim crisscrosses the river Tumen to attack Manchukuo-Korea border outposts. By the late-1930s, such raids provoked a Japanese military crackdown, which sent guerillas fleeing into the USSR. But having passed eastward through Hunchun in 1940, Kim's men are unsure whether they have crossed the border: "It was impossible to say where Manchurian territory [*Manjuttang*] ended and Soviet territory [*Soryŏnttang*] began," Kim reports (1999: 4–2: 232; 8–1: 80). However, after discovering a sentry box containing a shoddily made Russian tea set (Kim misses few opportunities to criticize the Soviets, to whom he owed his entire political career), he

explains himself to a border patrol by repeating his name and, tellingly, the word *ppalch'isan*—the Russian *partizan* borrowed into Korean (8–1: 82).

Luo also describes an opaque frontier not yet transformed into bounded national territory: indeed, echoing a partisan forebear in Olga, one guerilla laments the "confused era" (*hunluan niantou*) which the novel's protagonists are enduring. These are times of Chinese resentment and condescension toward Korean neighbors: "Who let them come and farm Chinese people's land?" Pockmarked Wang wonders during the taiga debate (Luo 1984: 94). While communing with their frontier surroundings, Han guerillas nevertheless long for their "homes south of the sea" near Laizhou (map fig. I.2), reflecting what Pang Zengyu (1995: 181) calls a Shandong-directed "cultural Oedipus complex" (*wenhua lianmu*). Here in what much of China still considers a "wild" (*ye*) place (see Conclusion), the older generation's identification with Hunchun remains contingent. Death in the community sees this come into focus, and at Liu Lin's funeral his flimsy poplar-wood coffin and red tasseled grave hat, which makes him resemble a tragicomic chicken, capture the cultural thinness of settler life. To escape the Japanese, Wang plans to return to Vladivostok to resume opium smuggling, showing that Manchukuo and Soviet Primorye still form one overlapping frontier for some Shandong migrants. But locally born Liu Qiang, who says he has "the lives of all Chinese people resting on [his] shoulders," will continue to defend "Chinese hills and forests," rejecting both banditry and exploitation of Koreans, retrograde dimensions of frontier life (Luo 1984: 164). A new identification with place, bringing life "outside" into the moral ambit of a new progressive national History, is emerging from the suspension and confusion.

New Time, New Inscriptions

The official Soviet, PRC, and DPRK partisan stories that would lodge in old bandit haunts around Hunchun were more schematic and embellished than the ambivalent accounts of sources from the time. Memoirs document friendly fire deaths (Borbat 2015: 90–95) and Russian villagers' White collaboration (Nazarova 2013: 110), while the dialogic intergenerational and Han-Korean struggles of *On the Borderline* are also present in *With the Century* as Kim Il Sung argues with veteran fighters and navigates a Chinese massacre of Korean Communists (Ryang 2021: 155; 165). PRC history exaggerates the strength of the "righteous and

courageous armies" (*yiyongjun*) and CCP contributions to them, North Korean textbooks eschew Kim's CCP membership, while Soviet narratives minimize the partisans' lack of strategic, never mind ideological, unity. Chinese and Soviet accounts alike marginalize Koreans. But the lived experiences of ordinary Ukrainian or Shandong transplants in "confused times" (*smutnoe vremia/hun-luan niantou*) nevertheless provided temporal material in which to inscribe new, nationally unified useable pasts.

It was appropriate that the Russian *gengzi* intervention had occurred only six months into Europe's 1900. If modernizers like Liang Qichao considered the impending century a "historical turning point" for China's advance into progressive spacetime (Tang 1996: 48), then Hunchun's reimagined local History would also occupy a new time frame. From "confused times" would be wrought the "century" or "age" (*segi*) with which Kim Il Sung claimed to be walking in step, a "fateful" (*rokovoi*) or "great" (*weida*) era, as the period of leftist revolutionary struggle is respectively memorialized in Soviet/Russian and Chinese accounts. The protagonists of this age, unlike the scholar-officials or generals of dynastic times, possessed the agility, righteousness, and, critically, the telluric rootedness of the mythic Manchurian bandit-hero. These qualities conveyed the "primordialism" underlying socialist political taxonomies, but while Ann Anagnost (1997: 11) suggests that new categories required destroying the "contamination of their 'feudal' past," I have shown here that much of that past remained fundamentally embedded in the "modern" project.

This was affirmed as symbols of the new age were inscribed in text and territory around Hunchun. The Han Chinese "Northeastern Writers Group" (*dongbei zuojia qun*), to which Luo belonged, explored the changes wrought on Manchurian lives under the dual onslaughts of Japanese occupation and modernity. These authors, alongside other northeastern intellectuals, promoted the anti-Japanese struggle in Manchuria as a universal "Chinese" concern, contributing to the development of modern Chinese nationalism countrywide (Mitter 2000: 2–3). Later critics including Fan Qingchao (2011: 113) see Luo's work as illuminating the "spirit of that great age," while literary scholar Ma Junshan (1991) marries temporal and spatial metaphors in noting that northeastern literature leaped "from periphery [*bianyuan*] to vanguard [*xianfeng*]" during this time. Crucial then that this work is rooted in Manchurian spaces—Luo's *Borderlines*, Xiao Hong's (1935) *Field of Life and Death* (*Sheng si chang*), Duanmu Hongliang's (1936) *Egret Lake*

(*Ciluhu de youyu*), and Xiao Jun's (1935) *Village in August* (*Bayue de xiangcun*). This instantiation of Chinese regional lore which, born of the northeast's fertile loam, is known as "Black Earth Culture" (*hei tudi wenhua*), inscribed settler attachments to these places into national History. The metaphorical "rivers and lakes" of bandit mythologies, and the wartime relationships forged there, were concretized as state territory via three-way nationalization of the *jianghu*.

Asserting their modern statehood with long technical names, the PRC, USSR, and DPRK also acted in starkly material ways to carve out distinct sectors of the once-overlapping Manchurian frontier. Alongside the categorization processes discussed earlier, boundaries were also reaffirmed through military confrontations. Preeminently territorial, Soviet Collectivization sparked unrest and widespread anti-Korean and anti-Chinese violence from 1928 to 1932, forcing tens of thousands to leave Primorye for China. Stalin's 1937 deportation to Central Asia of over 170,000 Koreans then deprived the area of a previously aggregating frontier population. In July–August 1938 paranoia over Japanese/Manchukuo cross-border infiltration—one motive for the deportation—combined with disputes over an 1886 Russo-Chinese boundary agreement and burst into open conflict with the Khasan/Zhanggufeng Incident southeast of Hunchun (Pulford 2020b).[31] As competing Japanese political and military interests argued internally, Khasan saw the world's largest tank battle yet, a precursor to the better-known Nomonhan Incident, and a Soviet victory. Confirming that new Histories were coterminous with new borders, this was also the USSR's first combat against a regular foreign army since its 1922 foundation (Karpov 2013: 4).

Further national separation occurred in August 1945 as Japanese soldiers and settlers were expelled from Chinese Manchuria by a 1.5 million-strong Soviet army. Commanded by future Soviet Defense Minister Rodion Malinovskii, a Ukrainian who had reentered Russia through Vladivostok during the Civil War (Golubovich 1988: 12), the Red Army ensured that Kim Il Sung and other Korean and Chinese guerillas who had crossed foggy borders in 1940 would be installed as leaders of new states. In Hunchun the Soviet intervention is remembered with an ambivalence that undercuts its official portrayal as a socialist "liberation." Against the blanket declarations of "Glory to the courageous soldiers of the Red Army who defeated the Japanese invaders," which appear on memorials across northeast China, including in nearby Tumen, my host grandmother spoke of her own mother's nightmarish recollections of rape and plunder perpetrated by

Soviet forces in Hunchun in 1945. Local women would smear their faces with mud and wear ragged clothes to appear disgusting to the soldiers, but many did not escape. In hushed tones madamae related that children were born the next year with anonymous Soviet fathers. "The soldiers must have been freed criminals," she says, "otherwise why would they have behaved like that? They were so violent and nasty, not at all like socialists . . ."

Also difficult to reconcile with internationalist support for China, Soviet forces dismantled lumps of Japanese industrial and railway equipment and transported them back to the USSR, appropriating trophies of Manchurian modernity for domestic development. But the proximity of the Soviet border did offer security to Manchurian CCP guerillas in the latter phase of the Chinese Civil War (1945–50). Their tellingly labeled "Northeastern Campaign to Suppress Bandits" (*dongbei jiaofei*) now applied the "bandit" epithet to the Nationalist *Guomindang* and a clamor of "landlords' militia, independent village self-defense corps, large, well-equipped remnant forces of the Manchukuo Army, Japanese Kwantung army stragglers, and various private armies" (Levine 1987: 139–40). Communist partisans still struggled to distinguish themselves from "bandits." One evocatively titled memoir, *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* (*Lin hai xueyuan*), by the soldier Qu Bo narrates an incident mirroring Kim Il Sung's singsong episode, for as Qu's Han troops entered a Korean village all the inhabitants hid for three days with their doors barred (Chu P. 1978: 382–399). The Koreans were eventually won over, however, and the Communists prevailed throughout Manchuria, ushering in an age of harmony between CCP guerrilla heroism and that of Soviet and Korean counterparts: still today the feats of fictionalized partisan Pavel Korchagin, hero of Soviet author Nikolai Ostrovskii's 1934 novel *How the Steel Was Tempered* (*Kak zakalialas' stal'*; *Gangtie shi zenyang liancheng de*), remain on the curriculum in PRC middle school literature classes. As sung by actor Vladimir Konkin in the iconic theme song—quoted in the epigraph above—to the novel's 1973 TV adaptation, Korchagin's struggle required support from Comrades "Truth," "Heart," "Memory," and, most poignantly, "Time" itself.

With the Hunchun frontier's half century of conflict finally ending after the 1950–53 Korean War, subsequent territorial inscriptions of new state Histories remain legible today. The wooded hills of Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (founded 1952) are studded with dozens of steles engraved in Chinese and

FIGURE 4.2: Martyrs stele at East Battery (*dong paotai* 東炮台), Hunchun, China (photo by author, November 2015).

Korean commemorating the "martyrs" (*lieshi*/*ryŏksa*) of the Anti-Japanese, Civil, and Korean Wars (fig. 4.2).

In the forests of DPRK's Onsŏng county just over the Tumen, the Wangjaesan Grand Monument faces southwards down the Korean peninsula, dramatic friezes at its base showing Kim's guerillas stealing weaponry from the Japanese colonial enemy, forging a new world out of old materials (fig. 4.3):

Soviet monuments on the wild coastline once frequented by Chinese "sea cucumber bandits" memorialize the Great Patriotic War (WWII), but also uniquely commemorate the USSR's first official conflict at Khasan, adding 1938 to the more typical dates 1941–1945 (fig. 4.4).

All these memorials form nodes of the equally symbolic but not necessarily synchronized ritual time of each contemporary state, decorated by local veteran groups, schoolchildren, and tourists, whose rhythmic visits make local terrain part of national time.

Finally, in perhaps the most emblematic of all terrestrial inscriptions around Hunchun, old *shenzei* haunts were eventually renamed as partisan sites. As

FIGURE 4.3: Wangjaesan Grand Monument, Onsŏng county, North Korea (photos by author, August 2014).

Sino-Soviet relations soured during the 1960s, Sinitically inflected space became politically uninhabitable by Soviet people. In December 1972, fifty years after the Bolshevik victory in Vladivostok, Decree No. 753 of the RSFSR Council of Ministers allocated new toponyms to 239 Chinese places in Primorye (Sovmin 1972). Many changes evoked the heroics of a half century earlier: Suchan became Partizansk (with outlying settlements Lazo and Avangard—"Vanguard"; fig. I.3). Lazo gave his name to a river (Lazovka, previously Vangou), while the Tsimukhe River became Shkotovka, and the Tadushi Zerkalnaia. Other locations received functionally industrial/proletarian names: Tetiukhe became Dalnegorsk ("Far [East] mines") and the nearby dock was renamed Rudnaia Pristan ("ore jetty") from Tetiukhe-Pristan. Like Greek-Turkish renamings in Cyprus (Navaro-Yashin 2012: 44) or the Hebraization/Judaization of Bedouin toponyms in Israel (Benvenisti 2002: 23), these were decisive assertions of settler sovereignty over both time and place.

Conclusion

The partisan seizure of time sovereignty over the Hunchun frontier, the inscription of their activities in terrain, and the embedding of bandit legacies in national time which this entailed, remain important to Russia, China, and North Korea today. Since these culturally textured processes undergirded the emergence of

FIGURE 4.4: Monument commemorating Great Patriotic War and Battle of Khasan, Slavianka, Russia (photo by author, October 2015).

all three twentieth-century states at their shared border, it is unsurprising that multiple ends of History have nevertheless seen the figure of the righteous partisan endure. The victory of agile Communist-organized guerillas over the Japanese remains a mainstay of school history-teaching in the PRC (Duus 2011: 107) and DPRK (Myers 2010). Even if Russian schooling has adopted more layered approaches to the Civil War in the post-Soviet era, partisanry remains a tenacious trope. In 2010 six youths from Kirovskii village near Ussuriisk calling themselves the "Primorye Partisans" (*Primorskie partizany*) launched vigilante attacks on local police, supported by locals who approved of their violence against corrupt authorities. At a 2015 football match celebrating Sino-Russian Friendship in Hunchun, I was told by the Russian team captain that his coaching style was based on the idea that "Russians need a strong leader." "Why is it that Russia has never lost a war? It's because of belief in victory. . . . The Russians are *partisans*, that's how we fight," he explained.

North Korea continues to celebrate its bandit-infused history to the point that, as historian Wada Haruki (1992) argues, a Kimist myth of guerilla spontaneity has transmuted into an entire national ethic of unpredictable behavior on the global stage. Like interpersonal friendship becoming socialist Friendship, demotic practice has been scaled up to interstate geopolitics. Russian president Vladimir Putin's recent fondness for the appearance of agility—even if supposedly short-lived "special military operations" turn out to be catastrophic drawn-out miscalculations as in Ukraine in 2022—echoes this. During Mao's Cultural Revolution (1966–76), the CCP too operationalized guerrilla-style irregularity, local rootedness, and contagious violence at the state scale (Toscano 2008: 422–425), while the Sino-Soviet Split saw Beijing recruiting non-aligned allies to surround the Cold War capitalist "camp," just as rural CCP guerrillas had surrounded Guomindang cities during the 1930s. Today's China, however, for decades a beneficiary of the post-1945 global order, is less of a "guerilla state."

In a geographically rooted context like Hunchun, such observations encourage us to reassess theories that see modern state-making as a top-down process of imposing order (Scott 1998). Borders here were made significant by the micro-level anchoring, both geographical and narrative, of local events in specific terrains; linear temporality attained meaning not just because it was projected over the region from powerful state centers but because plausible "mythic" events were lodged within it from the start. Partisan fighters were the vanguards of

progressive time, but they brought the timeless nobility of the bandit hero into the new linear time frame. My focus away from high-level statecraft has shown how lines notionally existing since the 1710s/1860s gained human significance only when the territories described by them (down to trees, hillsides, and rivulet gullies) were imbued with experiences that could credibly become national history. Borders thus materialized as gaps between the terrestrial stories told by distinct Soviet, Chinese, and Korean states, products of rooted local processes rather than impositions from above of territorial "modernity" or edge-reinforcing "border work" (Reeves 2014).

As Manchuria ceased to be an overlapping frontier, strangers increasingly came from over borders as avatars of progressive neighboring states rather than emerging rapaciously from the premodern sylvan shadows. Yet even if they possessed an alterity made legible by shared temporal trajectory, they were nevertheless bearers of their own mythic inheritances. In the next chapter, this book's last, I consider how Hunchun people's contemporary experiences of Sino-Russo-Korean borders themselves represent the capture of still deeper unruly pasts for (post)modern state purposes.

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PART III

PREHISTORY

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CHAPTER 5

Ends and Beginnings of Frontier History

> What has made it impossible for us to live in time like fish in water, like birds in air, like children? It is the fault of Empire! Empire has created the time of history. Empire has located its existence not in the smooth recurrent spinning time of the time of the seasons but in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe. Empire dooms itself to live in history and plot against history. One thought alone preoccupies the submerged mind of Empire: how not to end, how not to die, how to prolong its era.
>
> J. M. COETZEE, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (2004: 146)

Nature and Politics

Partisan time struggles, coeval socialist Friendship, and disjointed postsocialist mobility have all made physical and symbolic border crossing important for Hunchun people over time. Yet short-term Chinese visitors to the town today generally go right up to, but not actually over, the international boundaries nearby. During their visit, most tourists head to Hunchun's faux-tsarist coach station and take a small green bus southeastward out of town, past the Sino-Korean border crossing at Quanhe-Wŏnjŏng, and down a tapering sliver of PRC territory sandwiched between Russia and Korea (map fig. I.3). At the end of the road near the village of Fangchuan is the Dragon and Tiger Pavilion (*Longhu ge*) with a lift up to a viewing platform. Slogans promote the panorama as well worth the forty-five-minute trip, promising the chance to "see three realms at a single glance!" (*yi yan wang san jiang!*). These realms are China, in which you are

standing, Russia, where the dilapidated Soviet buildings, rail yards, and eponymous lake of Khasan settlement lie over a wooded bluff to the east, and North Korea, the bare slopes of whose Rasŏn Special Economic Zone show few signs of life beyond the somnolent Tuman'gang village across the river to the south. At the mouth of the Tumen beyond the Russia-Korea Friendship Bridge, the Sea of Japan is visible on clear days, a dark strip hugging the horizon.[1]

Visitors require some coaching to appreciate this indistinctly bordered landscape: geopolitics are hard to see. Fortunately, a welter of explanatory leaflets and posters with superimposed text makes the invisible visible, adorning walls at Hunchun's hotels, travel agents, and transport hubs (fig. 5.1), and handed out by taxi drivers to out-of-town arrivals. Terrain, by contrast, is easier to digest than territory, but, just to make sure, Hunchun's other main draw—its picturesque natural setting—receives equally lavish treatment. Glossy marketing materials extol the town's "wild" surrounds, promoting them as an unspoiled ecological haven removed from the large cities from which most tourists come (cf. fig. 4.1). As one publication produced by the Hunchun Communist Party Committee and city government boasts, Hunchun municipality's 5145 km^2 territory is "rich in forestry resources, grassland resources, wetland resources, aquatic resources, biological resources and mineral resources" (Zhonggong 2015: 19). Among the most

FIGURE 5.1: View from Fangchuan depicted in the tourist brochure *New Focus of Northeast Asia: Hunchun* (东北亚新焦点 珲春, Zhonggong Hunchun shiwei & Hunchun shi renmin zhengfu, 2015). Superimposed text from left to right reads "Russia, Sea of Japan, Hunchun (China), North Korea."

popular local foods are skewered lamb kebabs, promoted on the basis that the clean natural setting produces purer and healthier meat.[2] However instinctively visitors from busy, polluted conurbations enjoy such natural delights, plenty of effort is put into guiding their experience.

This chapter begins by considering these two aspects of Hunchun's externally projected image and how their neat packaging as consumables see geopolitics and ecology elide. Tourist publicity, which encourages us to gaze upon (*wang*), enjoy the sight of (*guanshang*), feast our eyes on (*baolan*), have a taste of (*inglüe*), and experience (*tiyan*) these political and natural vistas, evokes Barbara Bender's (1993: 1) description of "ego-centered" perspectives on landscape: once considered specific to bounded, Euro-American subjects, such a presentation befits a postsocialist Chinese society of increasingly "individualized" urban citizens (Yan 2009), who approach reified "scenic spots" and exotic terrain—domestic and foreign—as enthusiastic tourist-consumers (Chio 2014). Indeed, in the context of the onetime immobility of state-socialist formalism (Chapter 3), this packaging of landscapes might also be seen in terms of "re-enchantment," identified by Alessandro Testa (2017) as the rigidities of modernity give way to looser postmodern practices and transform experiences of place. While Testa writes of previously suppressed or dryly taxonomized folk rituals being imbued with a new liveliness for twenty-first-century European tourists, here terrain and territory—now liberalized out of economic, political and spatial fixity—are unshackled as attractions for marketized mass consumption.

Yet, as I explore here, tourism in Hunchun—and contemporary approaches to the town's setting in general—are still decidedly formal affairs, characterized by the rigid fixing in place of numerous enchanted, and indeed mythic, spatial and temporal textures. For one thing, as the above brochure's focus on "resources" (*ziyuan*) suggests, Promethean objectification of the environment, typical of high socialism, is not far gone, if gone at all. Tourism is, moreover, key to at-times-blunt government strategies to make Hunchun a northeast Asian "hub": Fangchuan's classification as a "state-level scenic area" (*guojia ji fengjing mingsheng qu*) reveals the curious elision of enchanted nature and bureaucratic politics which this entails. The postmodern developmentalism evident around Hunchun therefore rests on decidedly top-down harnessing of both lush terrain and geopolitically pregnant borders in service of local and national politics.

This, I argue, has significant temporal implications, for these processes are also concerned with writing history against the grain of lived pasts.

As Carole McGranahan (2010: 3) notes in work with Tibetan anti-Communist resistance veterans and how they narratively build community in exile, to make history is "to socially and politically legitimate a particular happening or version of what happened as true." Offering an indirect complement to Marshall Sahlins's abovementioned theory of "islands" of culturally ordered history (see Introduction), McGranahan observes that acts of deliberate forgetting are also key to presentist orderings of the past: social or political truths, such as Tibetan exiles' sense of belonging, rest as much on the "narrative absence" of discordant experiences as on the affirmed presence of shared pasts. As I show here, while involving state-aligned actors rather than subaltern figures and encompassing frames for national belonging rather than smaller-scale bonds, comparable processes of historical legitimation and foreclosing are evident in how time and space are objectified around Hunchun today. The fixing of bordered and natural landscapes as objects for domestic tourist consumption reflects a wider trend whereby earlier historical periods and their own dynamic relationships between nature, time, and politics are subsumed under today's overarching PRC developmentalist logic. With the view from Fangchuan as an entry point, I show this along two interrelated axes.

The first strand of my argument regarding local pasts and space around Hunchun rests on a direct comparison with the politico-ecological era that is paradoxically both most visible and most occluded in today's touristic visions, namely that of the Qing empire (1636–1911). Through a historical-ethnographic account of Qing Hunchun in its own terms, I show that while ecology has figured in many key political moments over time here—from sylvan guerrilla struggles to the Great Leap Forward's subjugation of wild lands—no period has seen the Hunchun landscape so centrally embedded in state-level affairs as the Qing. Under the dynasty's Manchu rulers, as important recent scholarship shows, the "pulsating power of nature" (Rogaski 2022: 81) played a core role in the expansive projection of imperial rule (Schlesinger 2017).

In comparison to ethnographically rooted earlier chapters, this historicizing presentation of temporalities and spatialities is constrained by my use of sources which here were acquired through engagement with Hunchun historians, archivists, museums, terrain, and locally produced texts. But the testament that these

provide of the importance of Hunchun and its surrounds during the Qing nevertheless sufficiently troubles today's spatialized history to justify my second line of argument, namely that the town's contemporary place in the PRC's geostrategic imagination relies on a retrospective silencing of the dynamic ecological politics that defined Qing historicism. Paralleling accounts of the distinctive regimes of Qing difference-making which remain restlessly entombed in the construction of the PRC state (Perdue 2007), I draw attention here to the spectral presence of the vast canvas that Qing rule draped over territory and people with all its impetus for deferral (Stoler and McGranahan 2007: 8) and temporal uncertainty. Described in a fictionalized anglophone setting by Coetzee's magistrate protagonist in the epigraph above, the common imperial desire for timelessness has in today's China been locked into linear frames of developmental space-time, but is not wholly undetectable.

By delving into the Qing, both on its own terms and through contemporary mobilizations of the past, this chapter therefore applies theories built up throughout this book of how mythic and unruly textures are layered within (post)modern ideas of progress. In adopting an ethnographic perspective on "both production and narration" of Hunchun's history (McGranahan 2012: 215), I show how the town's status today lends a kind of selective immediacy to what McGranahan calls "arrested" pasts lying further back than any yet explored here.

Frozen Time

Indications of how contemporary PRC spatiality in these borderlands requires the freezing-in-time of past dynamisms are already evident in relation to periods more recent than the Qing. Russia and North Korea's contributions to Fangchuan's three-realm vista reflect a striking arrest of socialist internationalism. Reduced threats of territorial dispute and the replacement of Cold War teleologies by capital-driven development have, as Akihiro Iwashita (2017) notes, driven a recent vogue for "border tourism" across East Asia, but this has especially remarkable features around Hunchun: in a Korean Autonomous Prefecture directly on the Korean border where, until recently, most of the population was Korean, North Korea is now framed as a mysterious (*shenmi*) and distant destination to be furtively glimpsed. Collapsing centuries of cross-Tumen exchange, socialist isomorphism and physical proximity, and reproducing Euro-American "Hermit Kingdom" narratives, Chinese tourism up to and over the DPRK border

now repurposes the erstwhile internationalist counterpart as an exotic asset. The taxonomically delineated subject of socialist Friendship is thus not only a container for twenty-first-century nationalism but also the packaged object of postsocialist consumption.[3]

Yet protruding through the end of socialist history is a still more significant past, for the view from Fangchuan primarily entombs the demise of the Qing, and the borders drawn between it and neighboring polities in the eighteenth (Qing-Chosŏn) and nineteenth (Qing-Russian) centuries. This past is not wholly overlooked: the road to the Dragon and Tiger Pavilion passes a squat statue of Sino-Russian boundary-negotiator Wu Dacheng, whose calligraphy "dragon" and "tiger" adorn the square outside; next to the pavilion is a plaza for viewing the 1886-laid *tuzipai* stone that marks the Russian border; and the building itself houses a Border Defense Culture Museum (*Bianfang wenhua zhanlanguan*), which describes the demarcation of both borders. But lurking silently behind this celebration of static defense are centuries of Qing dynamism, and a distinct relationship between natural landscape and political space.

Hunchun's "wild" surrounds were once central to a project of national advancement very different from today's state-led "development." Within what Wang Mingming calls "cosmological" dimensions of Qing governance,[4] landscape assumed an identity-defining role buttressing an uncertain, expansionist Manchu enterprise that sought precisely to forestall the drawing of definitive linear edges. Hunchun was a key node within this timeless Qing cosmology. Yet as with the end of socialist history, dynastic collapse entailed fundamental changes in both spatial and temporal epistemology for those ruling and living here. As East Asia jolted into imposed simultaneity with European colonialism, linear time and linear boundaries among polities and peoples were co-constitutive as Manchus, Han Chinese, Koreans, and Russians negotiated new senses of nation and past.

My Hunchun-grounded unpicking of the bygone dynamisms that were denied by this line drawing affords a new relativist account of the entanglements of temporality, politics, and terrain since the Qing. As Nianshen Song (2018: 15) shows in work on border demarcation around Hunchun, late-Qing experiences of "modern" territorial practice not only saw expansive Chinese, Russian, Korean, and Japanese formations collide along the Tumen but also "transformed a wild frontier into a wellspring of East Asian modernity." My time-focused

complement to Song's spatial exploration of converging social, economic, and political currents here amid migration and imperial tumult shows how modernity's temporalizing effects also had the much more static effect of freezing the Qing in time. The accreted temporalities that are "enjoyed" or "experienced" at Fangchuan today thus leave agents of the Manchu-Qing enterprise—like the objects of colonial or developmentalist gazes elsewhere—largely "without history" (Wolf 1982). The muting of emergent pasts by present progress's linear demands emerges from my presentation here of a Dubean "history without warranty," which seeks not to presume cause, effect, or posit nation-states as natural historical frames (Duara 1996).

The Enterprise and the Time Rebels

Hunchun did not immediately assume its totemic place in Qing history, for the foundations of imperial rule were laid on the other side of Manchuria[5] in what is today Liaoning province. Here a group known as the Jianzhou Jurchens were united as the Later Jin (*Hou Jin*) state under Nurhaci (r. 1616–1626) and then renamed "Manchu" (Man. *Manju*, Ch. *Manzhou*) by his son and successor Hongtaiji (r. 1626–1643), who also introduced the dynastic name Qing. Of direct relevance to Hunchun, groups of Waerka Jurchens living along the Tumen were incorporated into the polity during the Hongtaiji era (Yu 2008: 15). Even before the expansion of Qing rule over all China, this early state-building was marked by status competition with the Korean Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1897), culminating in two invasions (1627 and 1636) through which Hongtaiji cemented Manchu supremacy as a new regional power (Y. Wang 2018: 21–49). Hunchun was a key point of entry to Korea for Hongtaiji's armies, and Jesuit missionaries visiting eight decades later observed great holes the Manchu forces had smashed in defensive walls on the southern bank of the Tumen (du Halde 1735: 10). This period of violent borderland discord receives little attention at Fangchuan's museum.

With rule cemented around the northeastern homelands, in 1644 Manchu armies defeated the Ming (established 1368) in Beijing and expanded their reach across the lands of the Nikan, as the Manchus called the Han Chinese. This movement, known as "entering the pass" (*ruguan*) in reference to the Great Wall's easternmost Shanhai pass, signaled the dominant direction of the Manchus' expansive "great enterprise" (Ch. *daye*, Kor. *taeŏp*), a term applied to various East

Asian projects of sovereign history making over time (Wakeman 1985; Em 2013). Expanding territory southwestward meant the Qing was now steward of the vast sixty-year cyclical canvas that was the governing temporality for the empire (Ling 2019: 19), but like the jerk into Euro-American synchrony that ended the dynasty, this expansivism engendered a host of struggles for time sovereignty.

Foremost among the new dynasty's temporal clashes were those with resistant groups still wishing to live on Ming time. As Jonathan Hay (1994: 172) notes,[6] even the imperial foundation year of 1644 (*jiashen* by the sexagenary calendar) was disputed, since while the Qing traced its origins to 1636/*bingzi* in Manchuria, the last Ming loyalists were not defeated until 1662. The resulting overlap in time frames, and the refusal of "time rebels" to recognize the new regime, was expressed by Nikan literati and self-identified Ming "remnant subjects" (*yimin*) who, shaken by the violence of the Manchu invasion and the passing of the old era, felt temporal rupture as a kind of visceral bodily trauma (Ling 2019: 2–16). The abovementioned Manchu invasions of Korea implicated Hunchun directly in the Chosŏn Yi dynasty's own struggle to remain on Ming time. Notably given later deployments of the term to discredit enemies, Chosŏn officials looking north during the 1627 invasion—known in Korea as "Jurchen chaos in *dingmao* year" (*chŏngmyo horan*)—applied the epithet "chieftain of bandits" (*chŏkch'u*) to Nurhaci (Y. Wang 2018: 23). A buffer zone was established after the invasions and migration in either direction prohibited (Jin 1993: 7), but Qing-Chosŏn relations remained testy. Decades later during a 1712 survey mission to settle the common Yalu/Amnok and Tumen/Tuman River border, blundering interactions between representatives of Emperor Kangxi and King Sukchong[7] reflected ongoing antagonism, which, Andre Schmid (2007) observes, resulted from Manchu-Chosŏn distrust rather than a wider "China-Korea" dynamic.

Yet Chosŏn did eventually signal Qing temporal allegiance by adopting the official dynastic calendar (Y. Wang 2018: 14), and the relationship ultimately became paradigmatic for the latter's foreign relations at large (Westad 2021). In an era of overland journeys and natural cosmologies, this placed locations like Hunchun, directly on the border near the three designated Qing-Chosŏn trade sites—Chunggang, Hoeryŏng, and Kyŏngwŏn (Li and Cribb 2014: 70; map fig. I.3)—at the nexus of East Asian affairs. Befitting this, Hunchun acquired regimental garrison (*xieling*) status in 1714/*guisi* under Kangxi, taking a name (Man. *Hunčun*)[8] applied to this area as early as the twelfth century and possibly

deriving from *hancha*, a Tungusic word for a river fork (Li D. 1985: 1). As the wider Manchu-Qing project gained expansive momentum across East and Inner Asia toward Tibet and what is now Xinjiang, this was the most important of several new Manchurian garrisons, and lay under the deputy lieutenant-general (*fudutong*) at Ninguta (today's Ning'an; map fig. I.3). The district assigned to Hunchun's garrison center ran from coastal Haishenwai and Maokouwai in the east to the Changbaishan ridge in the west and Laosongling in the north (Jin and Huang 1987: 87–88), thus covering roughly the area of present-day Yanbian plus some of southern Primorye (fig. I.3). Like other emplacements, Hunchun was staffed by members of indigenous Tungusic groups related to the Manchus, in this case the Kiakar (Ch. *Kuyala*), who were recruited from settlements east of Ninguta and along the Ussuri River (Chen 2008: 78).

Wild Enterprise

If Hunchun's place within Qing-Chosŏn relations already shows that this was no mere imperial backwater—a role cemented, as I will show, as Russia's north Asian activities concurrently expanded—its significance went beyond realpolitik. Manchuria at large, a vast, variegated and fissile space of woodlands, mountains, and plains covering 1.52 million square kilometers and 15 percent of the land area of today's China,[9] was not really a Qing "frontier" in the way that idea is often understood, nor did it resemble other edges of the realm. Rather than being a locus *into* which the empire was growing, a "margin of expansion" (Lattimore 1947; Perdue 2005), or a hazy zone of interaction with unfamiliar peoples, politics, and landscape (Kim 2015: 45), this was a familiar origin point and a region symbolically elevated at the heart of dynastic identity. Unlike in the Han-majority heartlands, for example, cultivation, settlement, and exploitation of this sacred geography were formally outlawed by an exclusion (*fengjin*) policy for much of the dynasty, keeping it "separate from China, governed by Manchus only, home to a small but distinct indigenous population, and subject to separate rules" (Elliott 2000: 619).

The role of Hunchun's people and landscape was totemic within this. Connections running from local clans and the geography—particularly the sacred 2744-meter-high mountain named Changbaishan in Chinese (Kor. Paekdusan, Man. Golmin Šanggiyan Alin)—to the heart of the imperial enterprise made this a cornerstone in Manchu cosmology and senses of quasi-ethnic identity.

This became especially true at two key junctures, namely the gallopingly expansive midyears of the dynasty, when ideas of "Manchuness" became a chief concern of rulers in Beijing, and the late Qing when, as noted, the proximity of Russia, Korea, and other powers profoundly reshaped ideas of time and space at the end of imperial history.

Manchu Identity and Expansion

The wilderness-buttressed Manchu enterprise was trained in the opposite direction from today's Fangchuan gaze, originating in Manchuria, running through Han China and beyond. The energy that fueled the overthrow of the Ming, the incorporation of Tibet (1720/*jihai*) and bloody conquest of what is now Xinjiang (1755/*yihai*) saw the Manchu emperors "wrench the fate of the entire empire from its previous Chinese geographical moorings and anchor it solidly within the environment of Manchuria" (Rogaski 2022: 91). While previous chapters have traced the marriage of linear "progress" and outward expansion under modernity, territorial expansivism was a key feature of the Qing project too, even under cyclical sexagenary temporality. This rested on a sense of the Manchus as a fierce conquistador people from this rugged region, and ethnic, clan, ecological, and gendered vectors all made Hunchun central to the constellation of empire-wide rites and symbols that textured the canvas of Qing time.

The Kiakar deployment around the garrison founding offers illustration of the ethnicized and gendered dimension to this. Recruitments had begun even before Hunchun gained *xieling* status with several hundred arriving in each of 1671, 1677, 1683, and 1720, warily observed by Chosŏn officials over the river (Chen 2008: 79–80).[10] On arrival Kiakar were organized into local divisions of plain yellow (*zhenghuang*), plain white (*zhengbai*), and bordered yellow (*xianghuang*) banners (Yu 2008: 37), three of the eight formations that governed most of Manchuria and populated all Qing garrisons from Beijing to Guangzhou. In doing so they joined other regional Tungusic groups that coalesced within the banner ranks, "New Manchu" (Man. *ice Manju*, Ch. *xin Manzhou*) recruits joining "Old Manchus" (*fe Manju*, *jiu Manzhou*) of the pre-Hongtaiji era.[11] As a group dwelling close to centers of Later Jin power, the Kiakar had had pre-Qing tributary dealings with the Manchus, and so were older New Manchus than non-Tungusic or mixed Tungusic/Mongol Daur, Solun, Oroqen, and Xibe (Rhoads 2011: 20). As

such, they soon ceased to be identified as distinct and today are rarely discussed outside specialist texts, testament to processes whereby, as Mark Elliott (2001: 87–88) argues, belonging in the hereditary banner system became coextensive with "ethnicized" Manchu identity and "Manchuness" (Man. *manjurarengge*). Some of the distant ancestors of Hunchun's contemporary Manchu population therefore arrived during an era of ethnic mutability that made Hunchun pivotal not only in making expansive Manchu history but also in making History Manchu.

For those recruited to the growing garrison from the eighteenth century on, banner life also meant participating in a form of ethnically delineated imperial masculinity. Both the practical enforcement of Qing rule and its cosmological iconography rested on the image of the rugged bannerman horse archer. Outnumbered by the Nikan and other groups throughout the empire, Manchu claims to privilege as fierce conquerors depended both on reinforcing the "institutional sanctuary" of the Eight Banners (Sen 2002: 171) and, connectedly, on asserting a martial maleness encoded by the Chinese term *wu*, which, as Angela Zito (1997: 21) notes, was explicitly contrasted with more scholarly *wen* Han masculinity. Kam Louie (2002: 23; 33) further observes that alongside "bravery, mateship and physical strength" *wu* is associated with *yi*, a form of "horizontal" tie to one's fellows familiar in the above context of bandit blood brotherhood, and opposed to *zhong*, vertical loyalty between subject and ruler. Over time, therefore, politicized manifestations of rugged masculine sociality appeared to befit Manchurian ecology.

Hunchun's contribution to sustaining the *wu* ethic was affirmed in 1715 when, a year after the creation of the *xieling*, a three-room schoolhouse was constructed in the garrison's northeastern corner. Resourced by central border-reinforcement funds allocated through the banners and rebuilt in 1726 under Emperor Yongzheng (Yu 2008: 37), this institution trained the sons of local troops to enter the same three colored formations to which their fathers belonged. The site is still the location of a school today—the enormous Hunchun Primary School No.1—and a plaque by the playground entrance notes that early pupils were educated in the attributes of Manchuness required by bannermen (*qiren*), primarily Manchu language[12] and horseback archery (*qishe*). Considered a "basis" (*ben*) for Manchu culture, the latter skill was promoted in the banner ranks even after gunpowder-based firearms and modern military tactics were

adopted elsewhere in Asia (Rhoads 2011: 57). With some local imperial subjects permitted to "become Manchu" and be trained in *wu* practices from which others were excluded, Hunchun thus helped to construct a Manchu endeavor that was predicated on selective mutability of ethnic and gendered identities. Reflecting the long afterlife of these concatenated processes, local ethnological studies still describe present-day Hunchun Manchus as uniquely strong and brave (Li N. 1988: 26).

Dynasty and Ecology

The fact that rugged male figures were understood to come from a rugged place was no coincidence, and the ecological role of the Hunchun area ran right to the apex of imperial power. Particularly under Emperors Kangxi (r. 1661–1722) and Qianlong (r. 1735–1796), northeastern geography was elevated in dynastic self-representations as a site of Manchu origins and thus a setting that served as "the sacred root of the dynasty" (Rogaski 2022: 89). Motivated by concern that true Manchuness was being forgotten in the mid-Qing, Kangxi introduced ritual and cartographic visits to the region's "cragged peaks, wild forests and fertile plains," hardening their status as climatic and topographical analogues for official Manchu fierceness (Elliott 2000: 615). From the 1680s a key destination for these expeditions was the ancestral mountain Changbaishan in the western reaches of Hunchun *xieling* territory, which Kangxi made a focus of court rites in 1677 before visiting himself in 1682. Tours to this area also featured hunting trips to the Nanhuang royal enclosure along the Tumen, where emperors and courtiers performed the prized ethic of the mounted Manchu archer (Song 2018: 23).

As Jonathan Schlesinger (2017) notes, much of the wild image of the northeast in imperial legend emerged via a cultural "invention" of nature, but Hunchun offered plenty of inspiration for this process. A far cry from today's smooth arrivals by road or rail, pre-motorized travelers rode carts up steep tracks through woods and along river courses.[13] Visitors during the Qing included three Jesuit missionaries, who, while marveling at local forests rich in ginseng and sable in 1709, also shrank at the precipitous *montagnes affreuses* (du Halde 1735: 9). In 1886 a group of British aristocrat-tourists noted the density of nearby woods where they stopped to shoot black grouse (James 1888: 344). Indeed, even a century later in the 1980s just two daily minivans took all day to clatter to Hunchun from Yanji: members of contemporary Hunchun's longest-established business community

came from Wenzhou at this time, and recall five-night journeys preceding arrival, with a last stretch through rocky outcrops and lowland paddies. Concurrent with the project to package this landscape for tourists, such wildness has only recently been subjugated.

If local banner divisions and terrain anchored Qing cosmological rule, Manchu clans (Man. *hala*, Ch. *shi*) with their ancestral homes (Ch. *zuji*) in Hunchun contributed to this in more practical ways. Most significant among these were the Fuca (Ch. *Fucha*) from Hunchun's bordered yellow banner, who after two generations as officials in Beijing's Manchu city saw one clan daughter become empress. In 1727, aged fifteen, the girl (whose given name is not recorded) married Prince Hongli, who later succeeded his father, Yongzheng, as Emperor Qianlong. Formally instated as empress (*zhonggong huanghou*) in 1737 and named Xiaoxianchun, she became known as an advocate of silk cultivation (which she restored to court ritual) and an expert manager of the imperial household. Xiaoxianchun's ascent had symbolic ramifications for Hunchun, given Qianlong's reputation as the Qing emperor most concerned with *manjurarengge*. As Pamela Crossley (1990: 23) observes, he was a key advocate of the cultural consolidation project launched by his grandfather Kangxi and promoted "Manchu speech, riding and archery" (*guoyu qishe*), precisely the attributes taught at Hunchun's school. Xiaoxianchun and Qianlong bore two sons and two daughters, but only one daughter survived to maturity, a tragedy that purportedly broke Xiaoxianchun's spirit and hastened her demise.[14] She died in 1748 during an "eastern tour" (*dongxun*) with Qianlong to the Shandong Confucius temple (Kutcher 1997: 710–11). This kind of expedition showed that empire-wide touring was key to Qianlong's projection of multifaceted Manchu rule to different constituencies, including the Confucian Nikan, but he remained concerned with *manjurarengge*. Both before and after Xiaoxianchun's death the emperor headed for Hunchun *xieling* to pay respects at Changbaishan, visiting in 1743, 1754, 1778, and 1783 (Elliott 2001: 67–8).

The 1709 expedition of the abovementioned Jesuits—*Pères* Regis, Jartoux, and Fridelli—to Hunchun was also part of this tour-based consolidation of Manchuria's cosmological role. As Laura Hostetler (2001: 75) shows, cartographic and ethnographic projects served as tools by which the Qing, like other early-modern imperia, sought to "enlarge[e] and consolidate[e] the empire" through knowledge. Commissioned by Kangxi, the Jesuits recorded the territory and

peoples of this region to give those in Beijing a deeper understanding of ethnicized imperial origins. Acts of reading the source of Manchu rule itself in the natural contours of the landscape again placed Hunchun at the heart of the enterprise.

The exclusion of Han settlement here for much of the Qing further helped maintain this dynastic geography as ethnically and politically particular. Although this policy was, as Jonathan Schlesinger (2021) shows based on the Hunchun archive, less absolute than sometimes assumed,[15] its operation across Jilin from 1776 (Jin and Huang 1987: 88–9) dovetailed with Hunchun's geographical remoteness and migration bans on Chosŏn subjects to keep the garrison area largely Manchu. Indeed, among the tasks of Hunchun's banner troops was patrolling against Han and Korean fugitives, traders, and outlaws who came here illegally to mine gold, dig ginseng, or collect sea cucumbers (Edmonds 1985: 118–9). Those harvesting the latter two treasures in the hills and coves of the *xieling* were known as *shenzei*, "sea cucumber/ginseng bandits,"[16] imperial forebears of the Manchurian outlaws discussed already. Indeed, a brisk traffic in sea cucumbers and ginseng to and from Korea was central to the Tumen area economy for much of the Qing (Song 2018: 30), again suggesting only partial success in keeping Manchuria distinct. But the endeavor remained symbolically important until the final decades of the dynasty.

Given that this was a conquest enterprise, however, it was not symbolism alone that determined Hunchun's imperial status. As suggested by the iconic place of the bannerman soldier, questions of practical defense were intertwined with the cosmology of rule, reflected in Manchuria's division into military-administrative structures rather than the civil provinces, prefectures, and counties of inner China (Elliott 2000: 619). Hunchun *xieling* (regimental garrison) and Ninguta *fudutong* (deputy-lieutenant general) fell within Jilin, which was not a province (*sheng*) as it is today but a military department (*ting*). As part of the region's foundational inward-facing role within the project, Hunchun and other garrisons were key sources of reinforcements for banner armies across the empire (Song 2018: 21).

The outflow of capable Manchu soldiers, as well as officials like Xiaoxianchun's elders, combined with exclusion to keep the local population low. Suiting the rough vision of Manchuria constructed in the capital, this sparse militarized habitation is reflected in Hunchun's modest reinforcement figures between its

1714 founding and the late eighteenth century.[17] Despite being among the most important regional garrisons, by 1818 the population was still just 3,384 people dwelling in 480 households (Li N. 1988: 18), and even by the mid-nineteenth century local forces numbered only 430 men (Jin and Huang 1987: 88–9). This was a fraction of the thousands-strong soldieries who staffed regional garrisons in China-proper.[18] But here no habitation had to be especially large to stand out in the forests, hills, and plains.

This sparsity nevertheless had some paradoxical effects. Ordinary bannermen posted outside Manchuria were considered at risk of losing ties to the home region and its conquest-male culture, and so were required to lead ascetic lifestyles focused primarily on martial activities. This was generally made possible by the proximity in Chinese parts of the empire of Han settlements which could supply provisions. But in the wild, ethnically exclusive Manchu northeast, garrison soldiers did have to engage in agriculture. Around Hunchun some previously seminomadic Kiakar adopted a dual military and farming lifestyle with indentured soldiers digging the land to sustain the growing population (Chen 2008: 83), although like Han-supported communities elsewhere, they did benefit from the activities of another group—in this case, Koreans. During their visit the Jesuits were astonished by the extent of cultivation around Hunchun, remarking:

> "The country here is rather agreeable and, unusually among the Tatars, is well cultivated . . . the Kiakar [*Koel ka tase*] have followed the Korean example with the hillsides cut into different levels and, with extraordinary effort, farmed right up to the summit" (du Halde 1735: 9).

Use of elevated terraces was later supplemented by increased lowland farming, as indicated by records of floods causing disastrous crop damage in 1788, 1789, 1814, and 1846 (Jin and Huang 1987: 88–9).

The separateness of the Hunchun area with its barracks and schoolhouse thus ran along several parallel contours, all buttressing the practical defense of the empire and the terrestrially rooted Manchu right to rule. Vectors of symbolism and reinforcement flowing from here sustained expansive Qing sovereignty over both time and space. This dynamic relationship between people, politics, and landscape was recognized by Han intellectuals early in the enterprise. Following the bloody Manchu conquest of inner China, *wenren* literati damningly perceived their new alien rulers as an "epidemic to which Chinese civilization

fails to be immune," who threatened to make their own homeland "foreign" to them (Ling 2019: 18; 88). This territorially inflected perspective from the other side of the ethnicizing project reveals how Manchu martial masculinity appeared a natural force emanating from what those same literati viewed as a wild zone inhabited by "fish skin"–wearing people,[19] where people slept on the ground littered with animal feces (152; cf. Fiskesjö 2011). Civilizational condescension aside, perceptions of this place as both distinctive and paradoxically central to the new "Chinese" order of things were correct. Yet because of the particular end to which Qing history came, this dynamism was muted by subsequent national and historical endeavors projected from the Nikan center, to which I now turn.

Degrees of Separation

Perspectives that view history through the lens of an eternal "China" centered on the Han-settled Yangtze and Yellow River floodplains interpret above-discussed aspects of Qing Hunchun as evidence of the region's irrelevance. The diminutive local population, distinct military administration, and imperial expansion going on elsewhere suggest to some that, as historian Robert Lee confidently declares for the period 1736–1850, "the Manchurian frontier was the backwater of Chinese history" (2013: 57). The reach of this Sinocentric historiography extends beyond China,[20] beyond formal histories, and beyond the era of contemporary nation-states, as the abovementioned *wenren* disdain for this region shows. Indeed it is not only from the Han Chinese "center" that the area around Hunchun has been considered outside the historical and cultural mainstream: Koreans living farther down the peninsula also saw Hamgyŏng, the province neighboring Hunchun, which also happened to be the home region of the Chosŏn Yi dynasty, as a barbaric periphery where lesser Koreans fraternized with uncivilized Jurchens (Song 2018: 28).

Such views may help tell coherent stories about China or Korea, but, whether projected across space from self-appointed civilizational centers or backward through linear "national" pasts, they arrest Manchu-Qing history and peripheralize Hunchun within it. Especially clear evidence of this emerges today in contexts where that history is supposedly approached head-on, as is the case in Yangpao (map fig. I.3), an official "Manchu village" (*Manzu xiang*) that floats outside Hunchun's municipal center in a sea of cornfields stretching off toward Russia. Consisting of a few streets of single-story cement houses surrounded by

vegetable gardens or pens for geese and chickens,[21] Yangpao enjoys the status of "minority culture protection base" (*shaoshu minzu wenhua baohu jidi*) granted by the Hunchun government. Befitting its "ethnic" designation, this is expressed most clearly at the village's Folk Custom Exhibition Hall (*Minsu zhangshiguan*), where Manchu and local histories are narrated. The building's four rooms house exhibits on the flags and costumes of the eight banners, biographical sketches of notable Manchu personages, including Empress Xiaoxianchun, and a rich trove of material artifacts. I had to wander the corridors of the local government office to find someone to open the museum, but once inside, Ms. Li, a Hunchun Han civil servant, obligingly showed me around.

Most of Ms. Li's commentary as we toured the exhibits described the Manchus' linear development toward their contemporary status as one of China's fifty-six ethnic groups (*minzu*). The Manchus, she noted, started out as a not very civilized people and, although they possessed a script, they used it only for lists. When held up against the Han center's standards of literary *wen* masculinity, embodied in script (*wenzi*), civilization (*wenming*), and culture (*wenhua*), the *wu* valor of the bannermen implicitly came up short. Yet gradually, Ms. Li conceded, contact with the Han and time in power as the Qing saw the Manchus start using writing for other things, and generally become developed (*fada*). Advancement was also reflected in their traditional arts, most significantly paper-cutting, which originally focused on simple subjects but became more sophisticated over time. To illustrate this, Ms. Li gestured to the work of contemporary Yangpao's Paper Cutting Association (*jianzhi xiehui*) that adorned the museum walls. Naïve outlines of children at play, fish, or dancers hung alongside intricate depictions of the crater at the top of Changbaishan, and Cultural Revolution–era images of the cascading faces of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao (fig. 5.2). Indeed, the work of the association had also been rendered in metal to decorate Yangpao's lampposts, where two sets of twelve signs depicted the Chinese zodiac animals, and the slogans of the Xi Jinping–era Socialist Core Values campaign.

Use of traditionalized Manchu crafts to promote government messaging neatly complemented the presentist orthodoxy of Ms. Li's narrative, reinforcing the sense that the Manchus were—unwittingly—always progressing toward self-realization as participants in the future-PRC's multiethnic story. All this closely adhered to Sinicizing arguments that "conquerors and even neighbors of China were converted to Chinese ways by . . . a spontaneous and one-way

FIGURE 5.2: Ornamental paper cuts of Changbaishan 長白山 and Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao (photos by author, October 2015).

process" (Dunnell and Millward 2004: 3). By projecting teleological assumptions about nation-states backwards, such views cannot but peripheralize Hunchun, spatially and temporally. Much as Fangchuan is a sentry post for the outward-facing developmental vectors of today's PRC, this area under the Qing can only have been a marginal recipient of central processes, part of an undifferentiated

northeast where Manchus lived out an inconsequential strand of unitary "Chinese" history. The jumble of exhibits in the last hall we visited in Yangpao reinscribed the Manchus as merely one among several local "Chinese peoples" (*Zhonghua minzu*): competing for space on the dusty floor of the room was an inchoate jumble of stone steles recording the births of local Manchu nobles, chunky Han ceremonial vessels, Korean kimchi jars, rusted agricultural implements, *wula* grass shoes, embroidered floral patches, and sturdy hardwood cabinets.

These silent, static heirlooms of everyday life in a multi-*minzu* space convey a distinctive ethnology of the past. Like the "natives" described in early European anthropological studies, the Manchus emerge here as a bounded community burdened by fixed customs that could only be improved or changed through contact with external civilization. Warranty-less past dynamisms, which suggest a relationship between Hunchun and "China" that inverts the Sinicization view, are frozen in the service of contemporary ones. Also encased in these tractable fragments of diverse ethnic "traditions" is the turbulent late-Qing era, which saw both mass Han and Korean settlement around Hunchun and the drawing of the Russian border nearby. Yet these too have their own motile histories, and exploring these in their own terms reveals how local people and territory came to assume their contemporary configuration. More than this, the history of late-Qing Hunchun is that of a "wellspring," in Song's above terms, of the East Asian modern, a site whose temporal significance in shaping new ideas of "China," "Korea," and "Russia" would match its place in Qing history.

Imperial Simultaneity

In Yangpao, Ms. Li had informed me that although she would unlock the hall for me this once, next time I would need a letter of introduction from someone important. I was a foreigner, she said, in a "sensitive" (*min'gan*) border area. Experiences here and at other museums and archives around Hunchun gave the impression that Manchu-Qing History was a national strategic asset to be treated with caution. Prevalent across China, this approach bespeaks the complications of freezing both deeper Manchu pasts and the dynasty's messy end times, each of which might otherwise jump the tracks of linear statism. Indeed, the question of Manchu(rian) distinctiveness within imperial rule has made Manchu identity itself "sensitive" for much of the post-Qing era. After the conquests of

the enterprise's first three sixty-year cycles, late-Qing incursions from European colonial powers saw the imperial authorities increasingly reviled for failing—whatever their *wu* valor—to withstand external threats. Growing over time, this sentiment sparked the 1911 Xinhai Revolution that deposed the dynasty, and persisted up to and beyond the 1949 foundation of the PRC (Rhoads 2011: 281).[22] Under the CCP's post-1950s scheme for classifying *minzu*, many Manchus sought recategorization as Han to avoid discrimination. It was only with the attenuation of anti-imperial messaging amid broader sociopolitical loosening of the 1980s that Manchu-ness again became politically acceptable: the end of Maoist history retroactively detoxified the Qing demise. Yangpao received its official "Manchu village" status in 1984 alongside Sanjiazi, another settlement near Hunchun. The 1986 opening of a since-defunct government-run "Manchu Restaurant" in the town came thirty years later than (also defunct) Korean and Hui Muslim equivalents, signaling the time-lapse quality of this ethnic revival (Li N. 1988: 82–5). But since then Manchu identity has been more widely reappraised, and, echoing other borderland processes identified by Agnieszka Joniak-Lüthi (2015: 55) whereby individuals register as Han or non-Han depending on political shifts, reclassificatory trends have reversed. Recent times have seen Hunchun Han with at-best-spurious Manchu heritage but the right connections eagerly registering their children as Manchu, giving them *minzu*-focused affirmative action entitlements such as five extra points in the nationwide college entrance examination.

This mutable ethnic environment, a centuries-removed echo of the era when the Kiakars became "New Manchus," makes parsing the demographics of Yangpao, and of Hunchun, difficult: the 32 percent Manchu proportion of the village's 3,861-strong population, alongside near-equal proportions of Han Chinese and Korean residents (Yu 2008: 10), could reflect any number of negotiated ethnic processes over time. But the fact that the wider Hunchun municipality is today officially only 10 percent Manchu—whatever the extent of post-Mao Manchu revival—tells a blunter story of massive post-Qing population shifts. These occurred because of temporal and historical crises that made Hunchun's erstwhile status as a primarily Manchu space untenable.

Collision

If Manchuria's martial separateness once reflected cosmological imperatives to guard against Chosŏn time rebels, then the demise of the Qing saw incursion from

a different—but ultimately temporally more significant—adversary. Russian expansion into north Asia had in fact begun well before the nineteenth-century retrospectively named "late Qing," although this was rebuffed by assertive Manchu exclusivity. The contested *jiashen*/1644 conquest year was also when Cossack explorers first wintered at the mouth of the river Amur on the fringes of Manchu territorial awareness. Seen in the "civilizational" terms by which empires operate, this coincidence was literally that: as Siegfried Kracauer (1969: 140) suggests, "if events belong to two cultures or civilizations between which no interaction takes place, the fact of the succession or simultaneity of these events in chronological time is entirely irrelevant," but with contact now established, Qing and Russia slid into simultaneity. The political and cultural spheres of each for the moment remained calendrically distinct, but events rooted in them were now, in Christopher Pinney's (2005: 267) terms, "from the same time."

The threat of simultaneity motivated responses in Manchuria's constellation of military emplacements, including Hunchun *xieling*. Kangxi's first visit to Manchuria in 1682 included an inspection of new shipyards at Kirin Ula/Jilin City erected to counter Russian approaches; as well as several Kiakar deployments, the early eighteenth century also saw the establishment of a network of surveillance outposts (Man. *karun*, Ch. *kalun*) staffed by banner troops whose monthly or bimonthly rotations (Edmonds 1985: 115–9) gave a new martial character to rhythmic movement through Manchurian space.[23] Wariness of the alien presence to the north thus further anchored Hunchun within Manchu History-making. The Qing also retained time sovereignty via a victorious campaign hundreds of *li* northwest of Hunchun. Led by Manchu general Sabsu, whose first quest had been to locate Changbaishan in 1677 (Rogaski 2022: 115), Manchu forces repelled the Russian advance around their stockade at Albazin. The 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk that followed fixed the Qing-Russian border north of its present-day Amur position (map fig. I.2), even if precise divides remained ill defined in a mostly pre-linear cartographic age (see Pulford 2019: 58–60).

At first, simultaneity-inducing Manchu-Russian contact was limited. Each empire's premodern sprawl extended toward fuzzy fringes of rule, and so the two could tessellate loosely with occasional moments of direct interaction—including periodic trade caravans and annual fairs at Kiakhta on the Mongolian steppe (Afinogenov 2020: 104)—punctuating a boundless temporal canvas. Indeed, the two had similarities as cosmological-territorial entities too, since

mythologized frontiersmen also populated Russia's rugged edges: like Manchu bannermen, the Cossack vanguard of tsarist expansion were understood to lead lives that were "a paean to the physical and moral attributes of masculinity" (O'Rourke 2007: 158), embedded in rough landscapes and shunning productive labor. But as European Enlightenment ideas percolated into Russia, the approach of its rulers to terrain and territory changed. Impulses to compete with European imperial rivals meant that into the nineteenth century, eastward expansion and discrete borders with neighboring states were framed as necessary for progressive, worldly "civilization." Qing-Russian cohabitation in both space and time thus became difficult, and these shifting temporalities and historicities came to impinge on Qing subjects too. Increasingly direct Eurasian collisions with Russia prompted a wholesale reevaluation of the relationships between time, territory, and population beyond Manchuria, exactly as Hunchun became a layered "palimpsest" (Wagner 1972) for Korean, Han, and Russian frontiers of settlement and new national histories.

Crises of Simultaneity

As the European nineteenth century dawned, creeping ever closer across north Asia, Hunchun *xieling* was home to 21 of the 105 *karun* watchtowers dotted throughout Jilin (Li S. 1991: 159–60). Meeting the eyes of their bannermen sentries was a landscape more open than the riven borderland geography beheld from Fangchuan today: indeed, given rugged terrain's symbolic and practical roles, the sentries were surveying a fellow actor in the Qing imperial drama rather than merely the theater in which it was unfolding. All this would change as groups of alien spectators stormed the stage.

At the other end of Eurasia, Russia's 1856 defeat in the Crimean War sparked crises in St. Petersburg over relations with Europe and the need for a new imperial "breadbasket" (*zhitnitsa*) to replace the lost peninsula. Colonially minded nobles saw an answer to both in the Amur region from which Russian forces had been repulsed by the Qing in the 1680s, and successfully promoted a new mission to conquer and settle the area. Imagined as a fertile and, crucially, empty space, this would be an arena in which to counter Anglo-French interests in Asia, which had been developing since the snubbing of the 1793 British Macartney Mission by Hunchun-linked Emperor Qianlong. Aware of growing Qing frailty since those expansive days, Russian writers, officials, and prospectors cast Manchuria's

northern fringe as a *terra nullius* ripe for settler colonization. With a comparable absence of reflection on the elimination of indigenous Others that this entailed, imperial visions drew analogies with the progressivism of the American West, imagining a Russian "El Dorado" or "Mississippi" (Bassin 1999: 7; 176), and indulging in racially appropriative fantasies of founding a "Yellow Russia" (*Zheltorossiia*) to reinvigorate the Russian national story. As under Qianlong, Manchurian space thus became a hoped-for source of renewal at the center, but a different center with intentions to project quite a different temporal regime onto the frontier.

Competition with other expansive European settler colonialisms was part of a broader reimagining of Russian imperial destiny and identity. Planned celebrations for Tsar Aleksandr II's twenty-fifth jubilee in 1880 included orchestral works marking Asian conquest[24] and a theatrical piece imagining a conversation between "the Genius of Russia" and an embodiment of "History" (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010: 199). Proposals for Amur colonization also reanimated discussions of Russian national character, reprising "westernizer" vs. "Slavophile" debates over the empire's nature and evoking tenth-century encounters between the forest-dwelling Slavs of the Kievan Rus and their nomadic steppe neighbors (14). As in imaginings of Manchu identity, ethnic identification and edge landscapes elided, but the new frontier was to be a site not of symbolic emptiness but of settlement and "civilization" of the kind Ms. Li had found lacking in the Manchus. All this was newly incompatible with Qing approaches to space and time, both at the political center and among the wider imperial populace.

Hunchun saw early signs of this. As the Russian Amur advance bent southward along the Sea of Japan littoral into the eastern marches of the *xieling*, the 1858 Aigun Treaty ceded the left bank of the Amur to Russia and defined what would later become Primorye as a zone of "joint Sino-Russian administration" (*ZhongE gongguan*). The treaty also alluded vaguely to "a settling of the frontier to come eventually,"[25] but final resolution was hastened because, as often in European continental empires, Russia's settler frontier advanced faster than its administrative counterpart. Since well before Aigun, Russian peasants, fur traders, and fugitives had been arriving northeast of Hunchun, and by the late 1850s already numbered 3,399 in the area, compared to only 900 Chinese (Fletcher 1978: 341). Russian locals today recognize the resonances between these settlers and other frontierspeople: during my research in Khasan *raion* museum in

Slavianka, local guide Andrei Karpov termed them *aventiuristy* whose activities bore a "one-to-one" correspondence to British settlement in Australia or South Africa. "Everything is reproduced" (*vse povtoriaetsia*), he said.

PRC history interprets this disorderly early immigration as an indication that Russians were simply establishing de facto control over the territory before forcing de jure concession. This outcome occurred soon afterwards when in November 1860 land to Hunchun's east and northeast was fully annexed to Russia via the Treaty of Peking, which drew a new north-south border between the garrison and the coast.[26] Thereafter Russian peasant arrivals to the new Primorskaia oblast' accelerated: in 1862 there were already 6,000 Cossack residents of the Ussuriisk area immediately abutting Hunchun (Ilin et al. 1998: 207). Similar to the Kiakar before them, the Ussuri Cossacks had to take up farming in the early days and were given the best land to do so (O'Rourke 2007: 148). If these migrations and encounters offered localized hints at the import of what was happening, the Manchu-Qing response added to these events' epochal character, and generated a profusion of new vernacular historical encounters.

Defending History

Russia's rapidly expanding destiny-borne enterprise collided with a Qing polity that now faced losing the region most critical to sustaining its own imperial identity in space and time. As in any context where colonization brings histories face-to-face (M. Sahlins 1985), the sudden irruption of new ideas of civilization and progress into the Manchu world demanded a radical counterresponse. Much of this entailed mimetic internalization of the utilitarian linearity of European modernity, reevaluating relationships between temporality, terrain, and people within the cosmological enterprise. New policies abandoned the idea that Manchuria be kept empty or separate, and so the area was further reinforced militarily and opened to settlement. As Hunchun thus became more administratively and demographically subject to historical forces pervading a reimagined "China," the wild openness of Manchu history was foreclosed and local and national identity became delineated.

Like late-Qing reform efforts elsewhere that—as in the case of a new national census—provoked violent resistance from the empire's rural regions and ethnic borderlands (Lam 2011: 76), Hunchun-based responses to Russia's

proximity were halting and piecemeal. In theory administrative initiatives of the 1900s were intended to rebuild the empire "from the ground up," to actively disenchant its operation by dismantling hierarchies and "shut[ting] out the supernatural realm that was an inherent part of everyday life within the imperial state" (Lam 2011: 86–89). But measures to strengthen the Hunchun garrison following the 1860 Peking treaty suggested continuing faith in cosmological aspects of Manchu martial rule. An early-1860s deployment of nine hundred new banner troops consisted primarily of armored infantrymen (*pijiabing*), horsemen (*xiaoqi*), guardsmen (*fangyu*), and administrative banner officials (*bitieshi*) (Li S. 1991: 150), traditional troops that—though numerically significant (forces had trebled in two decades)—were ill suited to the latest European warfare. As Qing edicts continued to stress the virtues of mounted archery, efforts to prop up Manchu History thus remained temporally disjointed.

Nevertheless, signs of the new approach to territory and its defense were emerging. Visiting Hunchun in 1886, British-Indian civil servant Henry James (1888: 347) observed that the local soldiery, now numbering three thousand, was equipped with British muzzle-loading "Brown Bess" muskets and Winchester Repeaters, types of "foreign guns" (*yangqiang*) being adopted empire-wide at the time. Administrative changes also increased Hunchun's capacity to mount independent resistance to foreign threats, as in 1881 the garrison was elevated to the status of deputy lieutenant-general (*fudutong*) (Li S. 1991: 150). Now detached from its previous subordination to Ninguta, the town became a hub for the dispatch of its own detachments to smaller garrisons in the surrounding hills (James 1888: 361). Regular boat patrols along the Tumen also commenced from the early 1890s to monitor Russian activities (Li S. 1991: 158–9), following the late-1880s installation of two large cannons made by the German firm Krupp at fortified outposts (*paotai*) either side of the road between Hunchun and the Russian border. The earthen mounds of these batteries, which in 1900 would fail to repel the Russians' anti-Boxer invasion (Chapter 4), still jut out of the local landscape. Testament to their equivocal status as frozen monuments to Manchu-Qing decline, they lie neglected in scrubby farmland and have not become tourist attractions (fig. 4.2).

Amid the rush to fortify, the changing backgrounds of military personnel were perhaps the most momentous indication of a new understanding of land and its occupation. During the 1880s to 1890s, the banner population, now

around ten thousand (Yu 2008: 18), was supplemented by a special Border Pacification Army (*jingbian jun*). For the first time in Hunchun's martial history, this local force included Han Chinese as well as Manchu soldiers (Li S. 1991: 155) and was raised by Qing governor and Confucian scholar Wu Dacheng, also the first Han official to hold high office in Manchuria. Yet this was only a hint at the radical demographic changes that would propel the final cascading collisions of late-Qing time.

The Reclaimers

As weaponry and troops reflected a new emphasis on spatial borders, changing Qing migration policies, particularly toward Han and Korean farmers, transformed the role of space within those borders. The reimagining of settlement as a mode of human reinforcement made terrain into territory and elevated cultivated, rather than wild, land as an earthy basis for new ethnic and national identities. Early-to-mid-Qing cosmological work to maintain Manchu spaces for Manchus had, as noted, never been entirely consistent, and so non-Manchus had settled here before and during *fengjin*. Following 1697 and 1699 famines on the Korean peninsula (Jin 1993: 7) and the establishment of Qing-Chosŏn trading posts, itinerant Korean traders had arrived in significant numbers, while in 1709 the Jesuits observed that "constant" Korean-Manchu trade made Hunchun a hub for Korean-Manchu/Chinese interpreters (du Halde 1735: 9) and Korean-influenced farming techniques. Indeed, Han and Korean illegal migrants were increasingly employed to farm Manchurian banner land (*qidi*/*qitian*) as the dynasty aged (Shan 2014: 48–9). Yet whatever Hunchun's existing ethnic heterogeneity, this would fade into insignificance as simultaneity pressed from all sides following the Russian annexations.

In 1881, amid a wider regional rescinding of *fengjin*, land along the Tumen was opened to Han settlement (Schmid 2002: 208). Underlying this reform, which utterly transformed Manchuria's place within the empire, was a host of ecological and geopolitical cataclysms going beyond the advance of the land-hungry Russian frontier, from budgetary collapse to other foreign encroachments, popular unrest linked to both of these, and natural disaster in densely populated regions across East Asia. To Hunchun's immediate south, famines ravaging Korea in the 1860s were especially severe in Hamgyŏng province, where 1869, marked in the sexagenary time now imperiled by other calendars, was known as the "Great

Jisi Starvation" (Kor. *kisa daeki*). Growing numbers of desperate Koreans crossed the Tumen border into both Hunchun's surrounds and Russia's new Ussuriisk krai, despite Chosŏn attempts to prevent these still-illegal emigrations with its own territorialization measures, including erection of a watchtower "screen" (*paomu*) (Jin 1993: 7).

North China too, and particularly Shandong and Hebei provinces, was hit by famine and political and social unrest, and so increasing numbers of Han farmers and laborers also migrated northeastward. Adding to the population of old Han "bandit" miners, poachers, banner land farmers, and recruits to the new Border Pacification Army, the flow of settlers to Hunchun from China-proper thus swelled around the turn of the twentieth century. In a regional context, the triple-border's remoteness meant it was not a primary destination for post-*fengjin* Han migrants. But thanks to the advocacy of officials like Wu Dacheng, Manchuria at large witnessed one of the largest migrations in human history, with over twenty-five million settlers ultimately drawn here between the 1890s and 1930s (Gottschang and Lary 2000: 2–3). What had once been the fuzzy realm of Manchu cosmology was anchored as a fixed space of Han settlement and exploitation, demographic change reflecting a paradigm shift in the politics of expansion and progress, and their interrelationship. This historic reversal was neatly captured as Han migrants were described as "bursting" (*chuang*) out through the same Great Wall pass which the Manchus had used to "enter" (*ru*) Ming lands ahead of 1644/*jiashen*.

As Thomas Gottschang and Diana Lary (2000: 2) suggest, the new Han presence across Manchuria ensured in subsequent decades that the region remained conceivable as "Chinese" space despite both Russian and Japanese imperial designs. But these momentous geopolitical shifts and collisions between countervailing histories also took on more vernacular form for those involved. An 1886 household count revealed that Hunchun's expanding population had reached 2,350 families totaling 12,490 people (Yi 2012: 8), and it was the experiences of these Manchu, Korean, and Han inhabitants of the *fudutong* that spoke most clearly of how temporal and spatial transformation were experienced.

Korean settlers, who were quickly becoming a local majority, took up farming in the lowland countryside around the garrison, opening up taiga to wet-field paddy agriculture of a kind which, according to Chosŏnjok historian Changyu Piao (1990: 56), had not been seen here since the millennium-past Bohai era

(698–926 CE). Paddies still surround Hunchun today. Imprinting a new seasonal colonist temporality of sowing and harvesting onto the garrison's surrounds, their activities entailed transformations both similar to and simultaneous with the breaking up of Native land in North America into tenured parcels for "Euramerican agricultural production" (Rifkin 2017: 95): here the fields were mostly actually owned by Han landlords like Luo Binji's fictional character Liu Lin (Chapter 4). As the area's former inhabitants and erstwhile cosmological significance were, as in the United States, actively forgotten, Korean settlers became known as *kenmin* ("reclaiming people"), a label that—like earlier tethering of *qiren* Manchuness to a wilderness-embedded banner ethic—constructed quasi-ethnicity based on a relationship with the earth, but this time framed the latter as a productive resource.

Occurring amid broader shifts in the Qing-Chosŏn relationship in each dynasties' twilight years, *kenmin* arrivals sparked political contention. As Andre Schmid (2002: 208–212) notes, Beijing's rulers initially sought to repatriate all Koreans unless they submitted to Qing rule by adopting the Manchu queue hairstyle, which few did. During ensuing talks with the Chosŏn authorities in Seoul, the legitimacy of the Korean presence around Hunchun was also challenged on the basis that the abovementioned 1712 border-demarcation mission was inaccurate: drawing on an old historical ambiguity in written documents, advocates for the *kenmin* claimed that they were entitled to remain because there were in fact two river Tumens using different characters (土門/豆滿), only one of which they had crossed, thus remaining on Korean territory. Although some Qing officials were reluctant to accept such arguments, a waning grip on northeastern affairs and support from Wu Dacheng ultimately permitted the *kenmin* to stay (Song 2018: 99–101). Wu argued that compared to the looming Russian threat, the presence of Koreans as sociopolitically familiar—if sometimes vexatious—occupiers was preferable to further territorial loss if terrain was left empty.

Shifting views of land use became self-perpetuating, since reclaimers around the garrison provided food for Hunchun's further growth.[27] As Koreans outnumbered Manchus, the authorities moved beyond merely acquiescing to their presence and in 1885 created a new Bureau for Reclamation Management (*yuekenju*) to assist the *kenmin*. The establishment of a fifty-*li*-wide "special reclaiming zone" (*zhuan ken diqu*) stretching seven hundred *li* along the Tumen and allowing five years' rent-free cultivation, as well as 1890s innovations, including new

governance structures and promotion of modernized farming techniques (Jin 1993: 9–10), suggested that the on-the-ground friction of trans-Tumen migration had been smoothed relatively effectively. Indeed, even as interstate borders were assuming new linearity, familiar Chosŏn still fell within the Manchu-Qing temporal ambit for now. Centuries after resisting its adoption, in the 1880s the Seoul authorities were persuaded to use the Qing calendar in their correspondence with another growing regional power, the United States (Song 2018: 49). Dealings with Russia would not be as easily synchronized.

Imperious and Parochial

In his seminal *Islands of History*, Marshall Sahlins (1985) describes how vernacular meetings between people brought together by migration and empire are often also collisions between entire worlds and their wider historicities. For ordinary people, he observes, everyday interactions are thus both "confrontation[s] with an external world that has its own imperious determinations and with other people who have their own parochial intentions" (viii). If Korean experiences in Qing Hunchun demonstrated how collisions on both scales could be managed, then the jolt into simultaneity between Russian and Qing worlds had more in common with Sahlins's chief case study, namely the cosmological encounter that occurred as indigenous Hawaiians met and—answering the prerogative of their own sense of historical moment—killed Captain Cook on their shores.

Friction between populations had been a feature of inter-imperial interaction from the earliest Russian migrations into Hunchun *xieling*. In April 1859 several Chinese fishermen were imprisoned by tsarist officials along what they now considered "their" coast, obliging the then-garrison head to dispatch his subordinate *zuoling* De Yu to Maokouwai/Posyot to negotiate their release (Jin and Huang 1987: 90). Further fractious encounters resulted as Han migration was encouraged to counter the new Russian presence. Shandong migrants did not necessarily recognize newly linear borders, and as they pushed into what was now southern Primorskaia oblast' they joined significant numbers of Hamgyŏng Koreans, who would play a key role in the final Pacific projection of Romanov ambition before the dynasty's 1917 collapse. As Russian governance and military structures, including the Ussuri Cossack host, caught up with the settler vanguard, Han and Korean migrants helped meet a growing demand for labor in the

colony. By the 1880s Chinese residents made up over a third of the population of 1860-founded Vladivostok (Ancha and Miz 2015: 7), whose Chinese name *Haishenwai* ("sea cucumber cliffs") still evokes its erstwhile role as a cove frequented by *shenzei* bandits.

The most notable collision resulting from these parochial and imperious shifts was an 1868 mining dispute on Aksold Island east of Vladivostok (map fig. I.3). Following an initial crackdown there by Russian authorities on illegal Chinese gold diggers (known in Russian as *manzy*, suggesting ongoing identification with the region's Manchu/Tungusic residents), events spiraled into a full-blown conflict, which came to be known as the "Manza War" (*Manzovskaia voina*). As the dispute reverberated across the frontier, several hundred armed men set out from Hunchun to reclaim the island (Deeg 2013: 77), an ultimately fruitless exercise that elicited a still stronger Russian military response and much bloodshed. As the violence subsided, *manzy* involved in the disturbances were expelled from Russia back across the border at Hunchun and ordered never to return (Matveev 2012: 85–93). Into this region with a history of Qing exclusion, Russian imperial rule brought its own logics of banishment.

Anyone viewing Hunchun in terms of its residual place in a Manchu geobody would thus increasingly sense the "phantom pains" of territorial loss (Billé 2014), and friction led only to further acts of territorialization and fixing in place. Tensions flared again in 1886 during renewal of Sino-Russian border markers east of Hunchun, as each side accused the other of seizing more land than was allocated in 1860. Then-Governor of Primorye Pavel Unterberger accused the Chinese of seeking to regain access to the Posyot harbor (Matveev 2012: 258; 432), while the Chinese side blamed tsarist attempts to move the borderline one ridge westwards at Heidingzishan. For months the situation threatened conflict, but after negotiations led by Wu Dacheng, whose role explains why his statue now looms over the Fangchuan road, the 1886 Hunchun Protocol resolved matters by reaffirming the 1860 treaty. A boundary commission made territorial clarifications and re-delineated the border in the form that exists today, fixing the convergence of China, Russia, and Korea at twenty *li* above the Tumen mouth. Several decades of fractious Qing-Russian interaction, and the Qing dynamism that had preceded it, were thus decisively fossilized. The protocol also specified that fugitives in either direction would be repatriated, and so while Han work teams continued to be dispatched over the border, with some settling permanently in

Ussuriisk krai because life was more affordable there than in Hunchun (Arsenev 2004: 105–6), new use of territory meant a partial separation of populations. With Manchuria treated more like the rest of China, exploitation of land on both sides of the border drove a stake into the heart of Qing cosmological rule. Imperious collisions had sparked epochal crises over destiny and identity, yet parochial clashes over prosaic matters such as seafood and minerals had brought Chinese and Russian counterparts face-to-face.

Trade dealings between the two sides were colored by the same antagonism as Qing-Russian simultaneity. Early penumbral frontier commerce saw gold being smuggled from Primorye pits during the 1860s to be sold in the hills around Hunchun (Ravenstein 1861: 252), but—not always successful—formalization efforts soon caught up. In 1862 Hunchun's authorities released new regulations for exchange with Russia, and in January 1863 a trading party departed Vladivostok led by the merchant Ia. L. Semenov. Yet the group returned empty-handed, reporting Chinese intransigence. The feeling was mutual, and the visit had apparently been so unpleasant as to trigger an ambassadorial summons where the Russian representative to Beijing was asked to explain the traders' behavior in Hunchun (Matveev 2012: 48).

Relations gradually relaxed, however, and the 1886 Protocol included provisions for Chinese commercial vessels to navigate up the river Tumen, despite Russo-Korean control over the estuary. Regular boat traffic began to ply the waters between Hunchun, Posyot, and Vladivostok: by 1906 over 1,500 vessels had passed through Hunchun's Tumen port with a total tonnage of 25,000 (Chen 2005: 179). Qing-Russian trade discussions in 1900 included a proposal to exchange Sakhalin coal for tea leaves, red sugar, and *shaojiu* maize spirit (Li S. 1991: 403), but as maritime routes from Hunchun also extended to semi-colonial treaty ports such as Shanghai and Guangzhou, stranger goods were also appearing. In the 1880s Henry James observed kerosene lamps, clocks, soap, biscuits, and teacups brought westward to Hunchun by road from Russian territory. Testament to the impingements of global flows, and to a very different time of commerce from today's coursing of Chinese-manufactured goods into Russia, many of these items were in fact English-made (James 1888: 345). James and his companions were also treated to a glass of Portuguese madeira by the Hunchun *fudutong* (Younghusband 1993: 31). Conducted overland in the summer, exchange with Russia followed a roundabout route along the frozen Tumen during the winter

when the road was unusable (Arsenev 2004: 110). In an evocative reflection of the deteriorating grip of martial Manchu banner rule, one of the *karun* sentry posts was adapted into a customs inspection point for goods arriving from Novokievsk.

Where Korea was concerned, trade was also rapidly changing from the sparse frontier rhythm of arranged meetings for "half a day once every two years," which it had until the 1850s (Ravenstein 1861: 232). As flows of goods accelerated in proportion to cascading histories, more frequent demotic interaction motivated the Qing government to introduce new 1883 "Local Regulations for Business with Jilin-Korea Tradesmen" (Yi 2012: 7) to manage Tumen boat traffic and customs inspections. As well as being an attempt to govern increasingly irregular movements of goods and people, such measures reflected concerns that Russia would gain the upper hand in interactions with Korea and the region. Here too then was mimetic response to the activities posed by the new neighbors to the temporal and spatial order. Decades before what Jiwei Ci (1994: 25) calls China's socialist "detour on the road to capitalism," and Hunchun's recent emergence as a regional "hub," the town's material and economic environment was defined by a quite different regime of fast-paced cross-border traffic signaling its entry into global space-time.

Conclusion: Fin de Siècle on the Overlapping Frontier

In the center of Hunchun today, a small, unprepossessing brick building cowers under the town's literal developmental "rise." Saved from demolition because of its role as the office of an ambulance team at the main local hospital, the late-Qing customs house is an evocative memorial to an era of encounter across borders that were still assuming sovereign linearity. The building was constructed toward the end of the nineteenth century, when, as the calendar ticked toward the fateful year *gengzi*/1900 with its uprisings and foreign interventions, the configuration of people, land, and borders around Hunchun was assuming the form now marketed so vigorously at Fangchuan. Korean and Han influxes saw Hunchun's population roughly double between 1886 and 1909 to 19,260, then again to 46,188 by 1917 and once more to 85,625 by 1935 (Li N. 1988: 18–19). The walled town now contained inns, shops, and residential buildings in addition to the governor's *yamen*, with the barracks and the main market just outside the walls (Hunchun's East Market still lies on the same site—fig. 2.1) (James 1888: 345). Taken

as a whole, the cross-border territory of the old *xieling* was home to Manchu officials, long-term resident bannermen, newly arrived Han soldiers, Korean, Han, and Russian migrant traders, farmers, miners, and laborers all living among one another in comparably challenging socioeconomic circumstances.

In time, many newer settlers would become the protagonists of time struggles that would embed the progressive temporality of revolutionary socialist statehood into the region. Ethics of *yi* valor and *wu* martial prowess osmosed through local ecology from Manchu bannermen to "bandits" and Communist partisans, terrestrially rooted figures whose outsider/outlaw relationship to the dominant political order bespoke the alienation and objectification of terrain once central to Qing cosmology. But at the turn of the century, cross-border calendrical simultaneity was still a way off, and the Hunchun area was dominated by disorderly overlaps among vernacular senses of time and history, borne here via laborious frontier migrations. Source limitations of course make delving into granular settler temporalities difficult, but the seasonal demands of agrarian life, shifting labor needs, harvest festivals, and calendrical rituals anchored to them—as well as an overarching sense of collapsing social and natural order—would significantly have shaped local people's sense of time.

The similar experiences of many multiethnic migrants did not guarantee mutual comprehension or good relations. For one thing this remained a garrison town of a kind where friction between soldiers and non-Manchu populations were common (Elliott 2001). If the appointment of Wu Dacheng and the growing role of Sinicized Manchu officials had brought Chinese manners and culture here, many Manchus on the remote Korean border remained unfamiliar with Han ways. Concerted efforts to teach Hunchun's bannermen the Chinese language began only in 1891 (Yu 2008: 37),[28] and 1900 trade discussions with Russia were still conducted mostly in Manchu and Russian (Li S. 1991: 403). Han arrivals spoke no Manchu, and neither Manchus nor Han knew Korean. Those Koreans with long-standing dealings in Hunchun would have known Chinese or Manchu, but the thousands of recent arrivals from Hamgyŏng and beyond knew neither language in spoken form, nor, being illiterate, Chinese script despite its use in Korea. Local efforts to educate the *kenmin* had to wait for the 1911 Qing collapse, and even today many elderly Hunchun Chosŏnjok speak accented Chinese.[29] Where Russian was concerned, short-lived attempts to understand the neighbors followed the 1886 border as a Sino-Russian Academy (*ZhongE Shuyuan*) was

founded in Hunchun. Overseen by Iktanga, a Manchu assistant to Wu Dacheng, this institution for a decade educated the sons of bannermen, but a reorganization of the academy (which also had counterparts in Ninguta and Sanxing) saw the Hunchun branch moved to Jilin city in 1897 (Yu 2008: 37). Russian arrivals, who comprised peoples of diverse ethnicities from across the empire, spoke no East Asian languages. As the 1880s to 1890s "Volunteer Fleet" (*Dobroflot*, founded 1878) brought settlers from crisis-hit European parts of Russian imperial space (Matveev 2012: 271), Russian-, German-, Finnish-, Hungarian-, Polish-, and, most significantly in southern Ussuriisk krai, Ukrainian-language speakers arrived around Hunchun, mostly east of the new Sino-Russian border but some in Chinese Manchuria and Hamgyŏng too.

This sudden cosmopolitanism allowed Hunchun to emerge as a site for wholesale reimaginings of Korean, Russian, and Chinese history and identity (and Japanese for a time). And even if migrants lived in mutually uncomprehending culturo-linguistic spheres, a certain vernacular coevalness did eventually emerge amid epochal change. Nowhere is this clearer than among Hunchun's contemporary Manchu community, whose family histories and personal life stories reflect many of Hunchun's post-Qing transformations. While looking for somewhere to live during fieldwork in 2015, I met Lang Jianguo, a Manchu journalist in his fifties, whose maternal grandfather, a Korean, had fled the 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria to Primorye, married a local Russian woman, then escaped again with her back to Hunchun during Stalin's 1937 deportation of Koreans. The couple's daughter married a local Manchu, Lang's father, from whom he inherited the Manchu status now formally inscribed on his PRC identity card. Lang had grown up speaking only Chinese, and his journalistic career had followed determinedly Chinese vectors, taking him for spells to the distant former-Qing garrisons of Beijing and Guangzhou. No one knew anything about Yanbian in China's far south, he said, and to explain his origins to Cantonese acquaintances he had to tell them he was from "the beak of the chicken," an invocation of the animal to which the PRC's cartographic mass is often compared. A few kilometers of northeast Asian wooded taiga and the fugitive meshwork paths of Lang's ancestors had thus made a world of difference: had his grandparents remained on the Russian side of the ridge disputed in the 1880s and thus been deported by Stalin, Lang might have been born in Central Asia as a Korean. This kind of polysemous background was not universal among local Manchus,

and indeed older residents in Yangpao conversely recounted an enduring sense of superiority in this old Qing garrison, which had seen their parents forbid them from marrying non-Manchus. But whether embodied in exclusivity or mixing like Lang's, distant ethnic pasts remain imprinted in the intimate existences of still-living Hunchun Manchus.

In her work on "arrested" Tibetan histories discussed at the start of this chapter, Carole McGranahan observes that the silencing or active forgetting of narrated pasts does not mean that alternative histories are gone forever, merely that they are "delayed until a time in the future when it will be deemed appropriate to tell them" (2010: 5). But it is difficult to imagine a renarration on Manchu-Qing terms of the period when Hunchun stood as a wild node at the heart of ideas of martial bannerman masculinity and imperial time sovereignty. Mass settlement of Manchuria reversed the spatial and temporal trajectory of the enterprise, which had once radiated through the Shanhai pass into the old Ming domain and into Inner Asia, as the Hunchun area became a site of frontier overlaps for new Korean, Han, and Russian settler histories. The place of terrain was no longer as a sparsely rugged analogue for martial fierceness but as a space to be occupied, used, and tamed. Late-Qing policy innovations in the 1880s and 1890s framed farming as territorial defense, not a subsidiary activity to sustain appropriately masculine bannermen (Jin 1993: 9–10). As one later study of Hunchun Chosŏnjok put it, the *kenmin* constituted a "chain of houses over a thousand men strong" (Yi 2012: 7), and Han arrivals too, although initially less numerous than Koreans, embodied "a human shield against foreign incursion" (Shan 2014: 13).

From the rigidly disciplining perspective of today's PRC history, the—initially reluctant—acceptance by the Qing of the *kenmin* settlers is seen as a sign of long-standing inter-*minzu* "friendship" between Han and Chosŏnjok, rather than as the desperate gambit of a cosmologically collapsing empire. Under the cross-border gaze from Fangchuan, the dynamic relationship between terrain, time, and identity during that long dynastic age is similarly occluded, as Hunchun is positioned as a node for outward-radiating development. With borders and statues of their delineators becoming scenic "sights," the spatialized aftermath of imperial demise is packaged as a commodity. The still somewhat wild landscape is also harnessed to this end by a capitalist and preeminently "Chinese" enterprise whose thirst for objectification also manages to digest whole

the entombed end of socialist history with "exotic" North Korea. In this book's conclusion, I discuss one of the central ironies to this contemporary expansivism, namely the fact that the descendants of many of the Korean, Han, and Russian migrants discussed in this chapter are now leaving the Hunchun area and continental Northeast Asia at large. As linear PRC history reaches further back in time, forcing frozen pasts into the tight teleologies of its own forwardism, outmigration shows that those apparently settled histories in fact remain unpredictable. In an era of "ecological civilization" (*shengtai wenming*) under President and Communist Party Chairman Xi Jinping, this challenge to stories of expansion and their reifying gazes over "nature" may also make us ask whether the textures of modern progressivism—discussed throughout this book—offer a "resource" for embedding nature in politics in a manner that, while different from Qing cosmology, might also find roots in Hunchun.

CONCLUSION

History's Lines and Loops

> "We will open our arms to the people of other countries and welcome them aboard the express train of China's development."
>
> XI JINPING at Davos World Economic Forum, 2017[1]

When the high-speed railway from Beijing opened in 2015, it seemed yet another vector pushing China's postsocialist progressivism outward into Hunchun's surrounds. As this book has shown, lines of connectivity, like the gaze from Fangchuan, today coalesce into a twenty-first-century frontier dynamic that recruits landscape and people in the service of Chinese capital. The trainline's own steely materiality itself expressed the natural and geopolitical flattening which this entails: over viaducts and through hillsides across Jilin province, the track smoothed out undulating topography,[2] showing developmentalism's power to bring outsiders to this picturesque land of opportunity while also shielding them from the "frontier" they consume.

For all the excitement around the new line, however, its arrival also activated latent anxieties. Expansive promises of closer attention from Beijing and an extension to Russia were all very well, but not a few Hunchun residents observed that trains went both ways, questioning where their futurity really pointed:

"It will certainly make it easier for people to leave this place," observed logistician Jiantao wryly, "so maybe the population will start to decrease . . ." Jiantao had moved to Hunchun from Heilongjiang a decade previously and was well familiar with the patchy prosperity brought to the borderlands by China's "rise." Some people had profited from Hunchun's newfound "hub" status, he conceded, but as an outsider he had struggled to succeed in business, and his most recent

venture to open an electronics shop aimed at Russian tourists had been hit by currency fluctuations following the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine and drops in global oil prices. Over the years he had seen many like him simply give up and move on, and he was now considering doing the same.[3]

Recent business failings were not Jiantao's only reason for railway skepticism, as his Heilongjiang background lent him insight into deeper-running developmental discontents. Like most Han arrivals in Hunchun over the past three decades, he had moved here because of a lack of work in his rustbelt hometown. The place had suffered economically with the post-1980s retreat of state support for heavy industry, a wider pattern across the northeast, which has made economically buoyant Yanbian a rare regional success story: Heilongjiang people fill roles as service workers, taxi drivers, and shopkeepers throughout the prefecture. However, many more northeasterners in Jiantao's position have responded to the command economy's demise by leaving—in their millions—for places much farther afield than Hunchun. Between 2010 and 2020 alone, one-tenth of the population of the three northeastern provinces of Jilin, Heilongjiang, and Liaoning left for good.

This vast outmigration, matched by concurrent Russian and Korean departures from the wider Hunchun area, is a fitting spark for some final reflections on themes explored throughout this book. The depopulation of this cross-border region sets serial visions of progress, their collapses, and vernacular understandings of these into sharp relief. As spaces once imbued with imperial, socialist, or capitalist enterprises empty out, they become vacant shells, imprints of past progress. Expansive schemes projected onto frontiers today are now less reliant on human presence than the clunkily materialist projects of times past. In this Conclusion I consider the implications of this multidimensional exodus for ideas of terrain, territory, and contested temporal and historical visions in this region and globally. Successive efforts to straighten out history here have, it turns out, generated a paradoxical looping effect of returns and revivals.

Imperfect Returns

Demographic data from the PRC's decennial census shows that recent population shifts in the country's northeast have been more redolent of Manchu outmigrations during the pre-1850s high Qing (Chapter 5) than the settler era that followed. From a 2010 peak of 109.6 million people,[4] the region was home to 98.6

million by 2020, a decline of roughly eleven million, or 10 percent, with Heilongjiang seeing the fastest outflux. Between 2010 and 2020, fifteen of the top twenty fastest-shrinking cities in China were in Jilin (six), Heilongjiang (seven), or Liaoning (two).[5] This has bucked a national trend, for during the same period the PRC's total population grew by over 5 percent, from 1.34 billion to 1.41 billion (Stats 2010; 2020).

Also departing this region over the same time frame have been many Chosŏnjok, from both Yanbian and smaller northern communities in Heilongjiang. The primary destination has been South Korea, where around 710,000 reside as of 2022: indeed in January that year both Chinese and Korean news sources breathlessly reported that there are now more Chosŏnjok in South Korea than in Yanbian itself.[6] Thousands have also departed the prefecture for destinations within China, including coastal megacities like Shanghai or Guangzhou, closer places such as Dalian (like madamae's son—see Introduction), and Shandong cities such as Yantai or Qingdao (map fig. I.2). Further strengthening northeast China's Shandong-connectedness, South Korean businesses often base their PRC operations in this nearby peninsula, and offer bicultural Chosŏnjok jobs as translators or other intermediary roles at which they are considered adept (Jo 2017: 143). Unfolding at the same time that Han migrants like Jiantao have arrived in Yanbian, this has had a substantial effect on the prefecture's ethnic balance: the Chosŏnjok proportion of the population has fallen from 63 percent in 1949, to 41 percent in 1990 (Jin 2014: 55), to just 30.8 percent by 2020,[7] raising fears of Yanbian losing its formal Korean "autonomous" status.

If these parallel Han and Korean emptyings were not enough, the sector of Russian territory that lies within Hunchun's historic ambit has been undergoing demographically and economically parallel processes. The substantial drop in Kraskino's population discussed in Chapter 2 has been reproduced on a vast scale across the territories that comprise the Far Eastern Federal District. From a peak 1991 population of 8.06 million (Fedstat 2013), this area the size of western Europe was by 2021 home to just 6.16 million people, representing a decline across thirty years of over 23 percent (Rosstat 2010; 2021).[8] During the same period the total population of Russia fell too, but by just 1.4 percent, from 148.3 million to 146.2 million (Rosstat 2009).[9]

Although detailed figures for North Korea are hard to come by given the country's restricted information environment, comparable trends almost

certainly apply to North Hamgyŏng province too.[10] The 1990s to 2000s North Korean famine wreaked particular havoc on the population residing in this craggy, nonarable region scattered with defunct socialist heavy industry: many refugees crossing the Tumen during the late-1990s and early 2000s to countryside around Hunchun were from immediately over the border.

These summarized figures conceal fluctuations over the periods discussed, and subregional variation like Yanbian's comparative buoyancy.[11] But the overall picture is clear: in an absolute sense, and compared to nationwide and indeed global patterns, the number of people living in the Chinese-, Korean- and Russian-inhabited lands around Hunchun is decreasing at a significant rate. Demographers attribute falling populations in the erstwhile Cold War "West"—Italy and Japan are common case studies—to the "second demographic transition," a shift associated with societies' adoption of "postmodern attitudes and norms," including greater value on individual freedoms, personal mobility, and later reproduction (Zaidi and Morgan 2017: 474). Some of these frames have been applied to urban China too, although with reproductive restrictions (often termed the "one-child policy" in English) adding a complicating factor (Yu and Xie 2019). But postsocialist Chinese/Russian/Korean northeast Asia presents quite a different, if equally postmodern, situation. Some demographic decline here can be attributed to lower life expectancies and falling birth rates in regions straitened by economic crisis and ecological despoilment. Yet the primary—related—factor is people of all ethnic and national groups deciding to leave. Their choices to do so, at different speeds and in different directions, challenge visions of progress, particularly as they reverse the vernacular migrant flows and formal expansive enterprises of successive states and empires. The fact that, as Jiantao identified, this shrinking away from an ecological and geopolitical space of multiple progressivisms may also be accelerated by an infrastructural totem of postsocialist development—the near-frictionless high-speed train—is still more striking.

Southward

Throughout my time in Hunchun over the past decade, the town's main shopping avenue, Yanhe West St., has been decorated with colorful Chinese-language signs declaring "Stay in Hunchun in the summer, Live in Sanya in the winter" (*xia ju Hunchun, dong zhu Sanya*). Embedded into the sturdy metal lampposts that line the street, the backlit panels advocate winter sojourning on Hainan, a

large tropical island off China's southern coast. Yet this is not a publicity campaign for a particular tour company, airline, or hotel. The signs bear no identifying markers indicating which organization or agency is responsible for them, and locals who passed these panels every day were none the wiser about who put them there. A message suggesting people spend only half the year in Hunchun therefore forms part of the town's urban fabric, a sloganized statement that absence now forms part of local identity.

This message resonates across emptying northeast China over the past twenty years. Spending the winter in Sanya became an established custom throughout much of the region in the 2000s as domestic tourist infrastructure and affordable flights made the seasonal 3500 km trip financially and practically viable. Those undertaking the journey since then have primarily been retired northeasterners who do not have to be in one place year-round, with increasing numbers electing to decamp permanently to the palm-lined beaches and sun, far from Hunchun's harsh ecology. Winter temperature differences between Hunchun and Sanya reach up to 60°C, while parts of Heilongjiang are colder still. Hainan is generally considered much better for *yanglao*—living out one's old-age. This movement has been sufficient to transform the public image of Hainan throughout China. Sanya is today wryly thought to be almost entirely populated by northeastern retirees, with common jokes referring to Hainan as "the fourth northeastern province," or "Sanya city, Heilongjiang province." Of the 800,000 people living on Hainan, approximately 100,000 have northeastern origins.[12] Cultural connections between these two regions also see younger northeasterners traveling to party or otherwise hang out in this resort environment.

Yet when it comes to northeastern demographic decline, those who have made their way to the far south, however visible and cheerful a facet of the exodus, comprise only a fraction of overall departures. More prosaic—and historically more symbolic—are the majority of trajectories that involve less distance, as people retrace familial and friendship connections back to Shandong and northern China. Census figures from 2020 show 1.2 million northeasterners resident in Shandong, 1.1 million in Beijing, and 660,000 in Hebei province.[13] The precise destinations may not be exactly the rural origin points of the original "swallows and settlers" (Gottschang and Lary 2000) who arrived here between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but in its broad contours this choice among working-age people represents a reversal—though with similar

motivations—of the earlier migrations that burst "outside" the Chinese cultural world (Chapter 4). Like Manchu soldiers in the mid-seventeenth century, Han migrants have reentered the Shanhai pass (*ruguan*), performing the shrinkage of northeastern hope and optimism by riding national vectors which are now largely focused elsewhere.

For their part, Korean departures from the northeast have also been understood as a kind of "return," borne on a "Korean wind" (*Hanguk param*) to the South (Jo 2017: 32). The Seoul government itself has promoted powerful ideas of reunion among people of the "same ethnicity" (*kat'eun minjok*) and since the 1992 regularization of diplomatic relations with Beijing has incentivized "homecomings" among working-age people with special visa programs (Freeman 2011). Much of this—also open to Koryŏ saram, who have been encouraged to "return" to Korea from the former USSR since the 1990s—elides the fact that many Koreans who settled in the Qing, Russian, or Japanese empires had no roots in the southern part of the peninsula (Pulford 2021b: 422–3). Again, however, the generalized notion of the Korean peninsula as a kind of "homeland" (J. Kwon 2019) for "outside" Koreans (*jae'oe dongpo*) contributes to the framing of Chosŏnjok moves as a linear reversal.

Westward

Curiously, northeastern Han people who move to Hainan encounter some familiar faces there. Also since the 2000s, the island has been a popular destination for tourists from the Russian Far East, an affordable and not-too-distant sunny holiday spot that—much as border towns like Hunchun do—offers short-term, visa-free travel for Russian citizens. Advertisements for package holidays to Sanya have in recent years been as common in Primorye as publicity for shop-tours to Jilin or Heilongjiang. But even if a few Russian retirees have settled either immediately across the Chinese border or in Sanya itself, far greater numbers of all age groups have moved westward with their own country. Departures from eastern Russia have been especially numerous among those seeking employment and, sometimes, better climatic conditions. Like the Han and Korean cases, this sweeping reversal of earlier eastward migrations has not been an exact mirror of nineteenth- and twentieth-century settlements, not least because the places from which people came in earlier decades—Ukrainian villages and towns prominent among them—have themselves not fared well since the Soviet

demise. But like Chinese and Korean migrants moving closer to old kin or friendship networks, Russians now find a greater sense of connectedness to economic, political, family, and indeed civilizational networks in Siberia or the European part of Russia. This is where most people departing Kraskino and scores of other Far Eastern towns have gone.

However imperfect in their precise locations and routes, these multiethnic outflows therefore represent a massive human reversal of the Manchuria- and, within that, Hunchun-bound trajectories of earlier eras. Having shown in previous chapters how understandings of time and terrain emerge amid progressive enterprises, it is worth considering how migratory "returns" may challenge these ideas in the age of posthistorical state asynchrony where I began.

Shell States

Long a rootedly cosmopolitan site of convergence for multiple migrations and grand expansive schemes, Hunchun today thus has its own multinational diaspora. Spaces of cultural northeast Asia now extend to Hainan, Yantai, Seoul's Daerim district, Moscow, and Novosibirsk, demographic tendrils more expressive of exodus than expansion. But what of the region itself in light of these departures? As it turns out, even if fewer people want to live here, the Hunchun area remains important for enactments of certain national-progressive schemes and claims made by states to longer-term histories. Considering these forward- and backward-oriented visions, neither of which—curiously—is wholly reliant on people living here in the present, leads us to some tentative conclusions about how space, time, and settlement figure in visions of progress today. Emerging here in the posthistorical present are what we might call "shell states," emptied vessels of past progress where—notwithstanding central designs to the contrary—grand capitalist ambitions are uncoupled from population.

One caveat in relation to this idea is that of course most people in these neighboring parts of China, Russia, and Korea have not left. Declines of 10 or 23 percent still leave the majority in situ. Yet subregional movement also causes emptying, for rural areas across northeast China and eastern Russia have drained into cities. This has meant that major urban centers such as Changchun, Harbin, Vladivostok, or Khabarovsk—and a few smaller investment locations like Hunchun—have retained stable populations or even grown against the

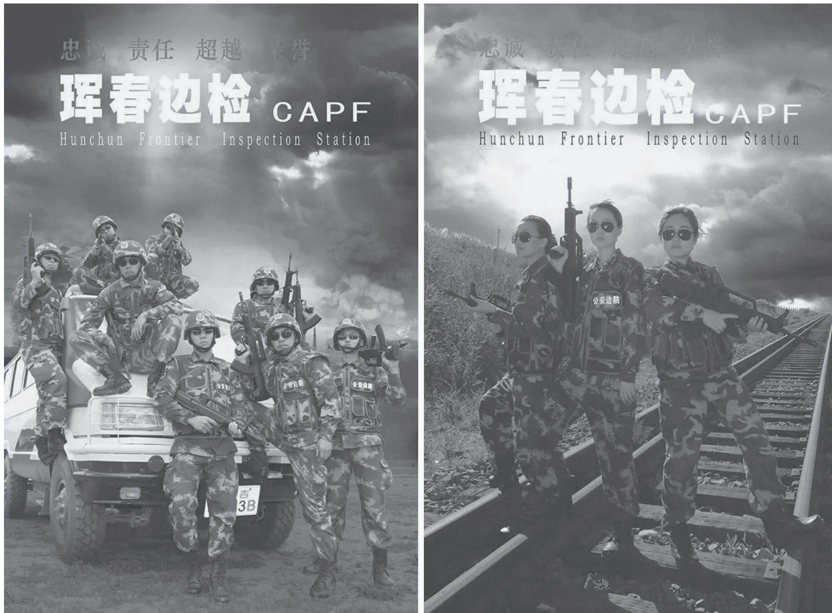

FIGURE C.1: Publicity shots for men and women of Hunchun Frontier Inspection Station at the Hunchun-Makhalino (Russia) railway border crossing. Retrieved from public WeChat account, July 29, 2015.

backdrop of regional decline. Increasingly, however, these are island settlements in depopulated seas of territory.

Sparser population may evoke echoes of Qing Manchuria before mass Han, Korean, and Russian settlement, and some continuities also emerge in how national visions are projected in gendered ways onto today's capitalist frontier. Successors to the Manchu bannerman conquistadors, ferocious "bandit" raiders, leftist partisans, and brotherly Friendships that once made History here, Hunchun's contemporary border guards engage in overtly masculinized spectacles of security (Debord 1992), even when its executors are women (fig. C.1).

But there are key differences in how these robust embodiments of central statehood relate to terrain in the twenty-first century. For one thing, unlike the fuzzily defined edges of the Qing imperium, today's securitized borders are linear products of the fossilized ends of socialist and imperial History (Chapter 5). Rough landscape and harsh climate may still be associated with the toughness of northeast China, eastern Russia, and northeastern Korea's local inhabitants,

but rugged people are called to act upon rugged terrain rather than emerging ecologically from it.

This leads to a second point of distinction with earlier periods of sparse habitation. The land may have fewer people, but central state initiatives to improve or "develop" it continue. In response to the exodus, authorities on all sides have sought to mitigate the economic and political cataclysms that have underlain outmigration. In China, a decades-old initiative to "Revive the old Northeastern industrial base" (*Zhenxing dongbei lao gongye jidi*) frames the northeast as a place that needs "saving," deploying a repertoire of spatial reorganization and capital-intensive investment typical of post-Mao developmentalism. As well as infrastructural projects—like Hunchun's railway—and efforts to "modernize" sclerotic regional industry, mooted spatial reforms have included making Liaoning's capital, Shenyang, a "directly administered city" (*zhixiashi*) like Beijing or Shanghai. Such an upgrade would be a resonant return to prominence for historic Mukden, capital of the seventeenth-century Manchu state which was the Qing empire's proto-polity.

In Russia too, formalized zoning and spatial reorganization have attempted to stem economic and demographic decline. New administrative spaces summoned into existence in the Russian Far East have included twenty-three Territories of Accelerated Development (*territorii operezhaiushchego razvitiia*, TOR),[14] created from 2014 and evoking high modernist forwardism. "Residents" of these zones of streamlined bureaucracy, relaxed regulation, and lower taxes are granted plots of land on which to base their businesses and are meant to receive smooth infrastructural access to electricity, water, and heating. In 2015, Vladivostok was made a "free port" (*svobodnyi port*) with tax incentives, simplified visa procedures, and reduced customs regulations designed to encourage foreign investment and entrepreneurship. Finally, a program dubbed the "Far Eastern Hectare" (*dal'nevostochnyi gektar*) was launched in 2016,[15] offering title to a hectare of land in the Russian Far East—at a certain distance from major settlements—to any person prepared to live on and develop it for at least five years. In 2020 the program was extended to notionally "returning" "compatriots" (*sootechestvenniki*), as Russian-speaking citizens of former Soviet countries are termed by today's ethno-nationalist state, and by 2022 had attracted almost 100,000 participants.[16]

Both these latter initiatives revived dynamics of the pre-Soviet era's Promethean approach to settlement and space. Vladivostok first held "free port" status under tsarist authority from 1861 (one year after its foundation) until 1909, growing as a cosmopolitan center of Chinese and Korean settlement and international maritime trade. In 2018 the city also regained its erstwhile imperial-era position as Russia's eastern capital, replacing Khabarovsk as seat of the Far Eastern Federal District. Away from the cities, the Far Eastern Hectare scheme reprises Romanov-era analogues, which granted much larger areas of land to settling homesteaders: after the Emancipation of the Serfs an 1861 ordinance offered 100 *desiatiny* (109 hectares) for twenty years to each family moving to the Amur or Primorye regions (Osipov and Tiutiunnikov 2007: 99). It was on this basis that many *maloross* settlers arrived in the ensuing decades, often after an eight-week journey by boat from Odessa in now-Ukraine. The new scheme's self-presentation as a return to "traditional" practices of incentivized migration reflects a general lack of discussion of settler colonial histories at the level of Russian officialdom.

Revivalism

These Chinese and Russian spatializing projects are thus widely clothed in the language of redemption and revival, reflecting the curious looping effects produced by efforts to straighten out progressive time. Yet Vladivostok or Shenyang/Mukden's mooted renaissances have generally not heralded wider success in either economic or cultural terms. Tellingly, cross-border attempts to "save" northeast China or eastern Russia, or revisit earlier territorial practices, have been weighed down by the legacies of earlier enterprises that reimagined terrain here and created infrastructural dependencies which are difficult to (re)move.

Against the uncompromising solidity of "rustbelt" industry, capital injections in northeast China have been compared to blood transfusions (*shuxueshi zijin touru*),[17] suggesting a bodily understanding of this region as a protruding limb whose life force is ebbing away (Billé 2018). Deployed in other Chinese locations with murky economic prospects, this sanguinary metaphor conveys what Christian Sorace (2017: 69–71) calls a "fantasy" of smoothly reconstituting the nation, which overlooks the friction imposed by existing social and political realities. In the earthquake-hit Sichuan villages Sorace studies, transfusions of aid are blocked by a lack of infrastructural connection to sources of relief. But here it is the accreted ruins of past progress that clog up inward vectors, all while

historic connections offer pathways away from the region. If outmigrants are vessels of nationhood, then the Shanhai pass now acts as a kind of valve through which their flow is difficult to staunch. The region may be emptying, but rather than gazing out on *terra nullius* (not that the idea ever applied), Chinese visions of revival cannot escape the symbolic and physical imprints that past progress has left on local ecology and territorial thinking, however much they resonate with Xi Jinping's wider spearheading of a "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese People" (*Zhonghua renmin weida fuxing*).

Russian privatization of land as TORs or apportioned hectares—usually in areas at least as remote as Sorace's rural Sichuan—represents a partial return to how things were before twentieth-century Soviet statism. But with that same socialist project having entirely reconstituted the telluric and demographic basis of the state (Chapters 3 and 4), today's revivalism is stymied by a distribution of resources and population unconducive to market economics or individual ownership (Makarov 2018: 120).

All of this encourages us to think, as I have in this book, about how far events unfolding in postsocialist or postimperial contexts are shaped as much by their "post-" ness as by the project the "post-" applies to (Chari and Verdery 2009). As the debris of earlier eras is dragged forward into present and future (Stoler 2008; Ssorin-Chaikov 2016), successive ends of history are at least as important as more alluring "revolutions" in shaping temporal outlooks. Contemporary efforts to encourage the northeast to "catch up" with the rest of China, or "accelerate" development in the Russian Far East, seek partially to reanimate earlier progressivisms. But unlike bygone expansive schemes that reconceptualized space, fostered mass migrations, and pushed the increasingly linear edges of polities outward, today's revivalisms are more retrospective and consolidatory, privileging capital expansion over that of territory or population. The edges inscribed by imperial and socialist expansivism are robustly guarded, but—from the anthropocentric perspective of modern states and subjects—what is within them is withering away. As formal initiatives show, however, this shrinkage does not make these regions irrelevant to projects hatched at state centers: indeed it may be precisely the sense of reversal, with its unsettling implications for both the past and the future of the nation, that encourages authorities to focus on imagined edge spaces as key sites within the linear history of the polity. In the rest of this Conclusion I consider the wider significance of frontiers in today's age of territorial friction and historical (re)visions.

Peninsulas of History

For all the revivalism and migratory reversals around Hunchun, borderlands still matter to deeper histories of the states that converge here. The human exodus may suggest that this is increasingly a historical "backwater" as mid-Qing Manchuria was once labeled (Lee 2013: 57), and indeed, leaving this space empty in some ways suits leaders in Beijing, Moscow, and Pyongyang, who have plenty to worry about beyond their temporally asynchronous shared frontier. Yet notwithstanding its fractured landscape of shell states, island cities, and central projects enacted piecemeal in progress's ruins, today's tri-national space of "rising" Chinese capital retains a key historic role for all three. Two cases that I identify here—one Chinese/Korean, over a thousand years old, one Russian, unfolding as I write this Conclusion—show History being made around edges. If anything, economic and demographic decline on a shrinking periphery can, as in Paul Richardson's (2018) notion of the maritime "hyperborder" between Russia and Japan, elevate the importance of marginal spaces within the state enterprise. Such locations, which sit spatially outside political centers but which—unlike Sahlins's (1985) *Islands of History*—are still physically joined to the imperial formation from which grand temporalizing visions are projected, may become peninsulas of history. For all Hunchun's self-understood peripherality (see Introduction), the ways that time is territorialized and multiple legacies of expansion are negotiated here today give it such peninsular qualities.

Back to Bohai

At the exit tollbooth on the G12 expressway outside Hunchun, just south of where high-speed trains whistle into town, cars and buses idle by the archaeological site of Balian, eastern capital of the Bohai kingdom (c. 698–926 CE) (covering all of map fig. I.3 and more).[18] Separated from the Qing by a millennium, the Bohai period is the next most prominent chapter in local History today, key to how progressive pasts, presents, and futures are strung together for two reasons.

Firstly, Bohai offers a precedent for inter-polity connectedness which can be mobilized to buttress twenty-first-century Hunchun's role within an internationalizing China. The state covered territory similar to that of today's Hunchun frontier, encompassing eastern Jilin, Primorskii krai, and North Hamgyŏng, and had a sedentary population, which subsisted on fishing, hunting, limited

agriculture, and horse herding (Twitchett et al. 1994: 11). Yet most resonantly for contemporary purposes, Balian, seat of the state's Longyuan province (*Longyuan fu*),[19] was a hub for trade along maritime routes known as the "Japan-Roads" (*Riben dao*). Through harbors at modern-day Posyot (now in Russia) and Rajin (now DPRK), Bohai vessels crossed to Japanese coastal locations from northern Kyushu to today's Fukui and Ishikawa (Yu 2008: 182–3). Like other smaller polities ringing China—including Japan and the Korean Silla state—Bohai's rulers maintained tributary relations with Tang (618–907 CE), and borrowed extensively from the larger state: privileged strata of the populace were familiar with what is now known as Chinese writing, musical forms, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Balian's grid layout was also planned on the Tang model (Yu 2008: 184; Ogata 2008). Consequently, Bohai-Japan contact, which, distinct from mostly ritualistic China-Korea-Japan ambassadorial visits of the time, had a strong commercial character (Verschuer 2006: 20–21), was facilitated by shared use of Sinographs without direct Tang participation (Twitchett et al. 1994: 5). As evinced by the size of its archaeological site, Balian itself flourished, profiting from trade in furs and other local treasures for Japanese silks, and from its position as center of the Bohai fishing fleet, whose catch formed the primary Tang-directed tribute. This defendable, climatically mild location was a focal point for intersecting cultural, political, and economic flows, and a military center on a scale that would not be seen here for centuries afterwards (Yang et al. 1984: 39–40). International connectedness, a "Chinese" lingua franca, and trade through the same Russian and Korean ports to which local businesses today seek access (Pulford 2016) thus make it an attractive early analogue for today's Hunchun-centered PRC developmentalism. Investment literature touts Bohai's seaward connections as natural precursors to President Xi's "Maritime Silk Road" and China's contemporary trade relations with the wider world. Balian's situation between the highway and the railway is thus symbolic of the selective mobilization of the past that cast Hunchun—in the language of roadside billboards—as "a pacesetter for development" (*fazhan paitou bing*) and a "model zone for international cooperation" (*guoji hezuo shifan qu*).

This harnessing of Bohai to today's progressivism also connects to the second reason for its importance for contemporary History. Balian's place alongside high-speed traffic arteries shows how the very developmentalism that mobilizes this past also carries you past its remains at great speed, affording little time

to mull over historical complexities. This is convenient, for like histories activated elsewhere by China's "rise," the Bohai heritage is contested, subject to rival claims between Chinese and Korean scholars (in both Koreas) who see it as part of "their" History. Nationally and culturally inflected historicities thus overlap, keeping this frontier narratively open. Given cosmopolitan Bohai's usefulness to today's Hunchun, the town museum north of Century Square (*Shiji guangchang*) skims over less resonant earlier or subsequent pasts. An exhibition of local history divided uniformly into dynastic eras (*dai*), the preferred unit of periodization in today's classificatory technocratic China as much as it was in imperial times (Banerjee 2020), provides each of the Liao-Jin (tenth through twelfth centuries CE), the short-lived Eastern Xia (1215–1233), and the Yuan (1271–1368) and Ming (1368–1644) a shiny black wall-mounted placard of equal dimensions, despite their durations varying from a few years to several centuries. Alongside key dates appear descriptions of the place of "Hunchun" (before it was named as such) under whatever "regime" (*zhengquan*) was in power, and the names of local archeological sites from the period, all spelled out bilingually in green Chinese characters and Korean Chosŏn'gŭl.[20] Under the Han-dominated Ming (1368–1644), the Hunchun area fell within the 1409-founded northeastern Nurgan Regional Military Commission (*Nu'ergan dusi*), and several guard posts (*wei*) were established here around this time.[21] These encouraged tribute-collection missions to the area, which switched the allegiance of local Jurchen groups, notably the Jianzhou ancestors of the Manchus, to the Ming from Chosŏn (1392–1910), who pejoratively labeled those to their north "boundary Jurchens" (*bŏnho*). Nurhaci, eventual Qing founder, participated in tribute and trade, which saw horses, furs, and ginseng (the latter two goods for which Hunchun is still famed) moving from here to the Ming center (Rawski 2015: 65). But as first among this parade of eras, Bohai is where History begins, its prominence magnified by a mock-up of Balian proudly arrayed in the center of the room, which places it squarely within "Chinese" History.[22] It matters little that during most *dai*, this Japan-facing littoral was for centuries detached from political, military, and economic developments on the Central Plains.

Visiting the museum itself in 2015 suggested that, caught in the whorl of its developmentalist present and future, Hunchun was still negotiating an acceptable authoring of this layered past. Located on the fourth floor of a six-story 1990s white-tile tower, the gallery was reached up an echoey concrete staircase

past an art school and library and through the offices of the local Culture Bureau (*wenhua bu*). As at Yangpao Exhibition Hall, one of the bureau's employees had to unlock this rather non-public room on request, suggesting the tentative place of official historiography within a changing present.[23] Much of this may be down to the claims made on Bohai (Kor. *Parhae*)—both discursively, and physically in the case of archeological remains—by presentist Korean History. North and South Korean scholars, for whom the past begins earlier than at the Hunchun Museum, see Bohai as sutured to their own peninsula, successor to the earlier Koguryŏ kingdom (37 BCE–667 CE), which covered much of Bohai territory (Kang et al. 2013: 33). Against PRC scholars' centralizing claims that the kingdom was a Tang sub-province because its rulers offered tribute and received rituals for "conferring titles" (*cefeng*), this alternative historiography considers such statements provocative attempts to subjugate Korea as a historical inferior. Western histories of Korea also usually include Parhae (Cumings 2005: 35–9). These uneasy overlaps have led to restrictions on Korean archaeologists excavating Balian, especially following suspected removals by visitors of artifacts from nearby tombs during the looser 1990s (Terrill 2003). Reflecting the frontier palimpsest here, however, South Korean archaeologists do still work on "ruins . . . from Korea's ancient Balhae [*Parhae*] Kingdom" in Russian Primorye, where no attempt is made to claim Bohai for "Russian" History.[24]

Arguments on both sides deploy categories of nation, ethnicity, and territory whose tangled imperial and socialist emergence in this setting have been documented throughout this book and elsewhere (Chen 2012; Schmid 1997). Contemporary Chinese portrayals of Bohai-Japan trade as an example of early "friendly Sino-Japanese contact" (*ZhongRi youhao wanglai*) (Yu 2008: 184–5) are also telling, given the place of "friendship" within international relations among discrete, post-Westphalian, and especially socialist polities: Bohai existed in an age of blurred borders, whatever its allegiances. Also of importance are Sino-Korean disputes over who inhabited Bohai, which betray contemporary preoccupations with the relationship between ethnic and state identification. Korean scholars stress that Bohai's foundation by a Koguryŏ ruler entails that its population was likely mostly composed of (Korean) Koguryŏ people (Kim 2010), while PRC sources foreground a group known as the Mohe (Kor. *Malgal*), Tungusic ancestors of the Jurchens. This in turn permits a link to the Jurchen-descended Manchus, today a PRC "minority nationality." Indeed, the Hunchun Museum

describes both the Khitans (*Qidanzu*) and Jurchens (*Nüzhenzu*), respectively the primary Liao and Jin populations, as "minority nationalities," categories that only make sense conceptually within taxonomies of East Asian modernity and spatially if one posits that, then as now, "China" was a single political entity with a majority Han population and non-Han frontiers. Local Hunchun archaeological (Yang et al. 1984) and historical (Yu 2008) studies adopt similar terminology to stress the common unitary past of "China," mapping frontier projections backwards to distant *dai*, which, in the Liao and Yuan case, have also proved sources of historical contention between Mongolia and the PRC.

Hunchun's surrounds are thus an arena for overlapping Sino-Korean historiographies. These go well beyond scholarly circles, and, as tensions break out into public discussion,[25] they parallel arguments over cultural "heritage," which contest everything from Buddhism to kimchi. However frivolous-seeming or narrowly focused, these must be understood in their own terms as specific political claims. In today's geopolitically and historiographically fraught East Asia, competing Bohai Histories are generative of what Michael Lambek (1998: 113) calls divergent "discourse[s] of the real." As participants in the intense, quasi-ritualistic rehearsals of each country's present territorial and ethnic self-identity, PRC, DPRK, and ROK scholars author culturally embedded histories like those observed by anthropologists globally, including the Madagascan Saklava spirit possession narratives Lambek examines. To observe that PRC History serves contemporary ends is therefore not to undermine local discourses of Hunchun's past, nor to deny Bohai's uniqueness. Balian with its peaceful Tang and Japan relations did indeed carry outsized significance within uncharacteristically orderly eighth- and ninth-century regional geopolitics, and its appeal as a precedent for contemporary projections of Hunchun's internationalization is understandable. But what this does show is how on jutting peninsulas of history, stories brought to prominence by China's twenty-first-century "rise" collide with the historical sensibilities of near neighbors, despite the exodus from the region in which the collisions occur. Linear narratives of bounded ethnic and national communities advancing through history and rooted in specific terrains ensure that emptying Northeast Asia remains at the heart of History-making projects. These are critical concerns given the importance and influence of the states that converge around Hunchun, and they also bear comparison with other historically cataclysmic events unfolding all the way across Eurasian space.

Crimean Resonances

Much of this book was written as a historical crisis unfolded in a place geographically distant from but often temporally synchronized with Hunchun. During the first year of my PhD studies, soldiers with no insignia appeared in Crimea, their anonymity belying the fact that—at least in the eyes of those who sent them—their mission was rooted deep in issues of historic identity. In the years since, and particularly following February 2022's renewed Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Peninsula and Ukraine at large have emerged as sites for not only Russian imperial atavism but also debates over whether history really "ended" when Russia and Ukraine ceased in 1991 to be part of the same—Soviet—polity. With Ukrainians falling victim to a violent spasm of expansionism, which reads only the morpheme *kraina* ("edge") in their state's name, Putin's is a project to bring to life—in the deadliest way possible—geographer Pierre Vilar's statement that "the history of the world can be best observed from the frontier." Memorably cited in Peter Sahlins's (1989: xv) work on the France-Spain border, the phrase thus echoes both here and in Bohai-linked Hunchun, each—again adapting Sahlins's father's term—a peninsula of history joined to multiple projections of the past in the present.

Indeed, attentive readers will have noticed Crimea's recurrent resonances for this project as a whole. While Russian forces' 2014 seizure of this Black Sea protrusion contributed to cross-border economic turmoil discussed in Chapter 2, it was loss in the Crimean War that encouraged Russian imperial architects' 1850s hunger for a new northeast Asian "breadbasket," including land to Hunchun's east (Chapter 5). Decades later, the 1886 visit by British Indian explorer-officials Henry James and Francis Younghusband saw the group share a bottle of Crimean claret with the local Russian general over the border in Novokievsk (now Kraskino), a Cossack garrison and Ukrainian migrant settlement (Younghusband [1890] 1993: 31). As discussed in Chapter 4, many new Slavic settlers arriving in Russian-annexed territory of the old Hunchun *xieling* at this time were *maloross* migrants from Ukrainian regions neighboring Crimea. These connections endure: in 2022 images circulated online of leaflets distributed in occupied Ukraine that encouraged Russian-speaking Ukrainians to take up Moscow government offers of land and subsidy, directly yoking the Far Eastern Hectare to imperial colonization. By June 2022, 308 people from the devastated southern Ukrainian city of Mariupol had arrived in Primorye's Vrangel' settlement.[26]

Movement and Stasis after Progress

Conventional conflict in Ukraine and East Asian “history wars” (Morris-Suzuki et al. 2013) simmering around Bohai encourage the notion that the temporal teleologies that notionally “ended” with the close of the Cold War have restarted lately. Yet amid the frenetic movement of unfrozen history, efforts to arrest time are also evident on several scales. At the Chinese center, still formally socialist historiography has been settling into a kind of timeless stasis. On November 16, 2021, at the Sixth Plenum of the Nineteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, Xi Jinping oversaw the release of a new “Resolution on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century.”[27] As Geremie Barmé notes, this capped off a project that frames the recent Chinese past in terms of three forward “leaps” (*feiyue*, distinct from the *yuejin* of the 1950s Great Leap Forward) from Mao to Deng and now to the Xi era, “reconciling” all previous eras of post-1920s history for an era of global PRC prominence. The contribution of “Xi Jinping Thought” (*Xi Jinping sixiang*) to Chinese Marxism thus places the CCP and Xi as the apotheoses of everything that has come before, leaving few places to go after this: having “foreclosed Chinese history,” Barmé wonders, can the CCP ever leap any further forward?[28]

If Xi’s brakes on political progress in a timeless “new era” (*xin shidai*) befit a China where the backward-trained lens of nationalism has supplanted socialist utopianism for many (Guo 2019), it also overlays hints that more conservative, and possibly less anthropocentric, temporal orientations may be emerging on the ground. While for many Chinese urbanites “suspension” is a common everyday affect (Xiang 2021), the frontier space around Hunchun has—like other border regions where Xi’s “ecological civilization” (*shengtai wenming*) campaign has gained traction (White 2024)—seen emerging concern with how “development” affects the local environment. Nature conservation in this region benefits from the charismatic presence of highly endangered Amur tigers and leopards. While China has several parks dedicated to the big cats, including 1998-founded Hengdaohezi Siberian Tiger Park near Mudanjiang to Hunchun’s north, Russia’s Zemlia Leoparda National Park (founded 2012) along the border north of Kraskino and, farther north still, the Zov Tigra National Park (2007) are more expansive refuges for leopards and tigers. Together, PRC ecological projects and Moscow’s efforts to turn depopulation of the Russian Far East into a virtue could

offer hope for synchronous lives across borders rooted in a more conservationist temporality. With characteristic expansive optimism, a 2014–15 exhibit at the Fangchuan Museum proposed a transnational travel zone and golf course spanning segments of China, Russia, and North Korea. Yet genuine alignment via natural zoning or ecotourism mostly remains "caged" by the taxonomically linear borders so jealously defended by states (Sun and Tysiachniouk 2011).

An asynchronous patchwork of movement and stasis thus remains the Hunchun borderlands' dominant temporal mode. As the gendered tendrils of Chinese developmentalism generate friction and further environmental degradation, as disputes over the past spark geopolitical conflict, and as modernist spatial techniques are harnessed to stem the historical migratory reversals, the fragmented experience of time itself here is shaped by the ends of progressivist projects embedded in local landscape and patterns of living. The very presence of the Hunchun area's multiethnic populace, the position of local borders and the temporal misalignments across them, all owe much to expansive endeavors' rootedness in local terrain. Grandiose efforts to enlist wilderness within the Qing enterprise, or projects to tame it under Russian and Japanese empires or Chinese, Soviet, and Korean socialisms, have been pervaded by unruly mythic textures and punctuated by experiences of time struggle. Through the windows of high-speed trains between Tumen and Hunchun, the ravaged countryside across the river in North Korea reflects a period when historical collapse caused particular desperation. Deforested hillsides bear the scars of *sotoji*, small private plots that starving locals carved out of sheer slopes to survive the 1990s to 2000s famine. Given the term's etymological association with mowing, this is a literal aftermath, an end of history plowed into the scarps.

Resources for a conservative temporality may exist within some of the progressivist traditions that have left their mark here. Beyond the "ecological civilization" of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, some scholars have sought to excavate "ecosocialist" elements in Marx's own work. As Kohei Saito (2017: 9–14) argues, against prevailing visions that see Marxist developmental theories as blind to resource scarcity and overloaded ecospheres, Marx was aware of the capitalism-driven threat of ecological crisis. An "ecosocialist" reading of *Capital* reveals to Saito that, rather than being concerned only with the Promethean subordination of nature, Marx—particularly late in his career—in fact saw the entire material world, including the natural one, as a "place of resistance against

capital" (14). Nature can thus again be an ally rather than merely an object. From a different angle, as Anya Bernstein (2019: 5) observes, Russia's layered inheritance of Orthodox mysticism and the materialist techno-utopianism of state socialism have given futurist thinking an enduring prevalence. Grandiose visions of a durable future for all humanity also appear to offer solutions for issues faced by ordinary Russians in daily life. Resonating with proposals to jettison a global growth-fixation as an antidote for late-capitalist malaise (Baer 2019), such thinking also attests to the humane textures that, paradoxically appearing to undermine progress while also lending it mass appeal, remain lodged at the heart of its temporal edifice.

Hunchun, then, at the center of a region once sealed off from settlement except by fugitives or exiles but later subject to overlapping processes of imperial expansion, socialist state-building, and mass migration, is a site for debates that resonate with experiences of time on a wider canvas. Progress-driven imperial expansions, including the movement of settler-colonial frontiers across North or South America, Australia, southern Africa, Inner Asia, Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, and many other places, comprise some of the largest population movements in human history. The fact that around Hunchun the main recent social and demographic story has been a reversal of these processes, driven by the decline of precisely the progressive projects that spurred migration in the first place, offers powerful justification for considering the grounded histories written here in a wider comparative context. As this book has shown, temporally mediated experiences reframe our understandings of imperial, socialist, and postsocialist formations, how visions of "progress" promoted by these acquire everyday meaning, and what happens as promises of advancement and expansion emerge as illusory. On peninsulas of history with their polluted ecologies, deracinated populations, and intensifying history wars, the multiethnic and international emptying out of a cross-border region repeatedly imbued with expansive optimism is only the latest event in this locale to offer answers to questions—pertinent worldwide—about progress and what comes next.

APPENDIX A: TRANSCRIPTION GLOSSARY

Chinese

Both simplified and traditional characters are used here depending on the period (pre- or post-1949) to which the term's use in the text applies. Place and personal names are not italicized.

Pinyin	**Hanzi** 汉子/漢字	**Additional notes**
Andelieyika	安德列依卡	
baguo lianjun	八國聯軍	
Balian	八連	
baolan	饱览	
baomi	保密	
baorong	包容	
Bayue de xiangcun	八月的鄉村	
ben	本	
Bianchuixian shang	邊垂線上	
Bianfang wenhua zhanlanguan	边防文化展览馆	
bianjiang	边疆	
bianjing kaifang chengshi	编将开放城市	
bianjingzheng	边境证	
bianyuan	边缘	
bieshu	别墅	
bingtuan	兵团	
bingzi	丙子	
bitieshi	筆帖式	

Pinyin	**Hanzi** 汉子/漢字	**Additional notes**
Bohai guo	渤海國	Kor: Parhae 발해
bu ke fen'ge	不可分割	
bu wenming	不文明	
Buerhatong	布尔哈通河	
bulaji	布拉吉	
caokou	草寇	
cangyou shudian	藏友书店	
Caomaodingzi	草帽顶子	
cefeng	冊封	
Chang'e	嫦娥	
Changbaishan	长白山	Man: ᡤᠣᠯᠮᡳᠨ ᡧᠠᠩᡤᡳᠶᠠᠨ ᠠᠯᡳᠨ Golmin Šanggiyan Alin; Kor: Paektusan (see below)
chao Ying gan Mei	超英赶美	
Chaoxian youren	朝鲜友人	
Chaoxianzu	朝鲜族	
Chaoxiu	朝修	
chuangguandong	闖關東	
chuantong geming youyi	传统革命友谊	
chengzhenhua	城镇化	
chun	纯	
chuncui	纯粹	
Ciluhu de youyu	鶿鷺湖的憂鬱	
cujin	促进	
danzi	單子	
dawalixi	达瓦里希	
Daxinggou	大兴沟	
daye	大業	Kor. *taeŏp* 대업
Dazuoshu	大柞樹	
De Yu	德玉	
difang wenhua	地方文化	
dizhu	地主	

Pinyin	Hanzi 汉子/漢字	Additional notes
dizi	笛子	
dong paotai	东炮台	
dongbei jiaofei	東北剿匪	
dongbei nü hanzi	东北女汉子	
dongbei zuojia qun	東北作家群	
dongxun	東巡	
Duanmu Hongliang	端木蕻良	
Dujiang zhencha ji	渡江侦察记	
dushihua	都市化	
eba dizhu	恶霸地主	
Efei	俄匪	
Ehuo	俄货	
Eluosi pengyou	俄罗斯朋友	
Eluosizu	俄罗斯族	
e'ren	讹人	
fada	发达	
Fangchuan	防川	
fangyu	防禦	
fanhua zui'e goudang	反华罪恶勾当	
Fanxiu linchang	反修林场	
fazhan	发展	Kor. *palchŏn* 발전
fazhan paitou bing	发展排头兵	
feiyue	飞跃	
fei	匪	
fengbi	封闭	
fengjian	封建	
fengjin	封禁	
Fennu de huoxian	愤怒的火焰	
Fu Zuoyi	傅作義	
Fucha	富察	
fudutong	副都統	
gangtie Changcheng	钢铁长城	
Gan'gouzi	干沟子	

Pinyin	Hanzi 汉子/漢字	Additional notes
Gangtie shi zenyang liancheng de	钢铁是怎样炼成的	
ganqing	感情	
Gaoli hongdang	高麗紅黨	
gengzi guobian	庚子國變	
gewasi	格瓦斯	
gongheguo	共和国	Kor. *gonghwaguk*
guanshang	观赏	
guanwai	關外	
guicheng	鬼城	
guisi	癸巳	
guniang	姑娘	
guoji hezuo shifan qu	国际合作示范区	
guojia ji fengjing mingsheng qu	国家级风景名胜区	
guojihua	国际化	
Guomindang	國民黨	
guotu	國土	
guoyu qishe	國語騎射	
Hailan	海蘭	
hainan jia	海南家	
haishen	海參	Kor. *haesam* 해삼
Haishenwai	海参崴	
Han Shasan	韩杀三	
hanzi	汉子	
Hanzu	汉族	
haohan	好漢	
hei tudi wenhua	黑土地文化	
Heidingzishan	黑頂子山	
Heihe	黑河	
heiyouyoude	黑黝黝的	
Hengdaohezi	横道河子	
Hongqi renmin gongshe	红旗人民公社	

Pinyin	**Hanzi** 汉子/漢字	**Additional notes**
honghuzi	紅鬍子	Kor: *honghoja*홍호자
Hongqi	红旗	
hongxing	紅星	
Hou Jin	後金	
Hunchun	琿春	Alternative Chinese characters used over time include 渾蠢
Hunchun he	琿春河	
hunluan niantou	混亂年頭	
huose	货色	
huzi	鬍子	
jiandao	間島	Ja: Kantō
jiangchang	疆場	
jianghu	江湖	
jianshe	建设	Kor. *kŏnsŏl* 건설
jianzhi xiehui	剪纸协会	
jiaoliu	交流	
jiaowu	交恶	
jiashen	甲申	
jiebai	結拜	
jihai	已亥	
jihainian shi'er yue chu qi	已亥年十二月初七	
Jilin	吉林	
jinbu	进步	Kor. *chinbo* 진보
jinfei	金匪	
jingbian jun	靖邊軍	
jiu guo jun	救國軍	
jiu Manzhou	久满洲	Man: *fe Manju*
kaifa qu	开发区	
Kangmintuan	康民团	
Kangxi	康熙	
kanjia	砍价	
Kao Shan	靠山	

Pinyin	Hanzi 汉子/漢字	Additional notes
kalun	卡伦	Man: *karun*
kenmin	墾民	
Kuyala	庫雅拉	
Laizhou	萊州	
lanweilou	烂尾楼	
lao buke po	牢不可破	
laoban	老板	
laojia	老家	
Laosongling	老松嶺	
lengmo	冷漠	
Liang Qichao	梁启超	
Liangshan	梁山	
Liangshui renmin gongshe	凉水人民公社	
Liao-Jin	遼金	
lieshi	烈士	
lihai	厉害	
Lin hai xueyuan	林海雪原	
Lin Zexu	林則徐	
linglüe	领略	
Liu Yonghe	劉永和	
Longhu ge	龙虎阁	
Longyuan fu	龍源府	
luan	乱	
Luo Binji	駱賓基	
luocao	落草	
luohou	落后	
lühua	绿化	
lülin haojie	绿林豪杰	
lülin	綠林	
Machuanzi	马川子	
Malidai zhuan	玛丽黛传	
mazei	馬賊	Ja: *bazoku*; Kor. *majŏk* 마적
maimai	买卖	

Pinyin	Hanzi 汉子/漢字	Additional notes
maitai	埋汰	
Manzhou	滿洲	Man: Manju
Manwen	滿文	
Manzhouli	满洲里	
Manzu	满族	
Manzu xiang	满族乡	
Mao Zedong	毛泽东	
Maokouwai	毛口崴	
maozi	毛子	
meihao qianjing	美好前景	
Mila	密拉	
min'gan	敏感	
minsu zhangshiguan	民俗展示馆	
minzu	民族	
Mohe	靺鞨	Kor: Malgal 말갈
mu'er	木耳	
mulin	睦邻	
Nan Zheng Bei Zhan	南征北战	
nande de huijian	难得的会见	
Nanhai Changcheng	南海长城	
Nanhuang	南荒	
neibu	内部	
neidi	内地	
Ningguta	寧古塔	Now Ning'an 宁安
nongfei	農匪	
Nu'ergan dusi	奴兒乾都司	
Nüzhenzu	女真族	
pan	盼	
paomu	炮幕	
paotai	炮台	
pianren	骗人	
pijiabing	披甲兵	
pingdeng	平等	

Pinyin	**Hanzi** 汉子/漢字	**Additional notes**
qiang	搶	
qiangdao	抢盗	
Qianlong	乾隆	
Qidanzu	契丹族	
qidi/qitian	旗地/旗田	
Qimuhe	杞木河	
Qing	清	
Qingwen	清文	
qiren	旗人	
qishe	骑射	
qishi niandai de Zhongguo	七十年代的中国	
qu	区	
Quanhe	圈河	
renda	人大	
renmin	人民	
Renmin ribao	人民日报	
Renmin zhiyuan jun	人民志愿军	
renshen	人參	Kor: *insam* 인삼
Riben dao	日本道	
ruguan	入關	
San guo yanyi	三國演義	
Sanjiazi	三家子	
Saqi	萨其	
shang shan xia xiang	上山下乡	
Shangba de gushi	伤疤的故事	
Shanhai	山海	
shanlin	山林	
shaojiu	烧酒	
shaoshu minzu wenhua baohu jidi	少数民族文化保护基地	
Shatoujiao	沙头角	
shen	參	
sheng	省	

Pinyin	Hanzi 汉子/漢字	Additional notes
Sheng si chang	生死場	
shengtai wenming	生态文明	
shenhua ZhongE youyi	深化中俄友谊	
shenmi	神秘	
shenqi	神奇	
shenzei	參賊	
shi (city)	市	
shi (clan)	氏	Man. *hala*
Shiji guangchang	世纪广场	
Shuaibinfu	率賓府	
Shuihu zhuan	水滸傳	
shuniu	枢纽	
shuxueshi zijin touru	输血式资金投入	
Sidalin	斯大林	
Sidalingele zhanyi	斯大林格勒战役	
sixiang	思想	
Su Wu muyang	蘇武牧羊	
Sucheng	蘇城	
Suifenhe	绥芬河	
Sulian de jintian shi women de mingtian	苏联的今天是我们的明天	
Sulian lao dage	苏联老大哥	
Ta de daolu	她的道路	
Tamen you zuguo	他们有祖国	
taoyuan jieyi	桃園結義	
tese	特色	
tewu	特务	
Tianye shang de xueyu	田野上的雷雨	
tie fanwan	铁饭碗	
ting	廳	
tiyan	体验	
Tongkenshan	通肯山	
tongxing zheng	通行证	

Pinyin	**Hanzi** 汉子/漢字	**Additional notes**
tu	土	
tuanjie	团结	
tufei	土匪	
Tumen jiang	图们江	Kor: Tuman'gang (see below)
tuzipai	土字牌	
Waerka	瓦爾喀	
wailairen	外来人	
Wang si mazi	王四麻子	
wang	望	
wei	衛	
weida	伟大	
weida shidai	伟大时代	
Weida de zhuanzhe	伟大的转折	
wen	文	
wenhua	文化	
wenhua bu	文化部	
wenhua lianmu	文化恋母	
wenming	文明	
wenren	文人	
wenzi	文字	
Women cunli de nianqing ren	我们村里的年轻人	
wu	武	
Wu Dacheng	吳大澂	
Wu'erhunshan	烏爾琿山	
Wuhu	芜湖	
wula	烏拉	
wuxia	武俠	
Xi Dada	习大大	Referred to in Introduction as Sŭp Taedae습대대
Xi Jinping	习近平	

Pinyin	Hanzi 汉子/漢字	Additional notes
Xi Jinping sixiang	习近平思想	
Xia	夏	
xia ju Hunchun, dong zhu Sanya	夏居珲春, 冬住三亚	
xiali	夏历	
xian	县	
xianfeng	先鋒	
xianghuang	鑲黃	
xianji shi	县级市	
Xiao Hong	蕭紅	
Xiao Jun	蕭軍	
xiaoqi	驍騎	
Xiaoxianchun	孝賢純	
xieling	協領	
xin Manzhou	新满洲	Man: *ice Manju*
xin menhu	新门户	
Xin Yu	辛雨	
Xinhai geming	辛亥革命	
Xinhua	新华	
Xinwen lianbo	新闻联播	
xiongdi guojia	兄弟国家	
xiongdiban	兄弟班	
xisu	习俗	
Xuangao ge youbang shu	宣告各友邦書	
xunzhao nanzihan	寻找男子汉	
Yalu jiang	鸭绿江	Kor: Amnok 압녹
yamen	衙門	
yan	严	
Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhi zhou	延边朝鲜族自治州	Kor: Yŏnbyŏn Chosŏnjok chach'iju연변조선족자치주
Yanbian ribao	延边日报	Kor: *Yŏnbyŏn ilbo* 연변일보

Pinyin	Hanzi 汉子/漢字	Additional notes
yang	洋	
yanglao	养老	
Yangpao	杨泡	
yangqiang	洋槍	
Yanhe	沿河	
Yanji	延吉	
Yantai	烟台	
ye	野	
yemen'r	爷们儿	
Yezhuhe	野豬河	
yi yan wang san jiang	一眼望三疆	
yi	義	
Yi ge putong de zhanshi	一个普通的战士	
yihai	乙亥	
Yihetuan	義和團	
yimin	遺民	
yin sheng yang shuai	阴盛阳衰	
Ying Lian	英廉	
Yingchengzi	營城子	
Yinghuang jule jiudian	英皇俱乐酒店	
yiyongjun	義勇軍	
Yongzheng	雍正	
youhao fangwen	友好访问	
youhao huzhu	友好互助	
Youjidui yexi muchang duo huangniu	游擊隊夜襲牧場奪黃牛	
youyi	友谊	
youyi jiaoliu	友谊交流	
youyi si hai shen	友谊似海深	
youyi xiehui	友谊协会	
Youyi zhi ye	友谊之夜	
yu ri juzeng	与日俱增	
yuejin	跃进	

Pinyin	Hanzi 汉子/漢字	Additional notes
yuekenju	越墾局	
yulu	语录	
Zhang Dejiang	张德江	
Zhang Xueliang	張學良	
Zhang Zuolin	張作霖	
Zhanggufeng	張鼓峰	
Zhenbaodao	珍宝岛	
Zhenchayuan de gongjuan	侦查员的龚娟	
zhengbai	正白	
zhenghuang	正黄	
zhengqian	挣钱	
zhengquan	政权	
zhengyigan	正義感	
Zhenxing dongbei lao gongye jidi	振兴东北老工业基地	
zhixiashi	直辖市	
zhixin pengyou	知心朋友	
zhong	忠	
ZhongE gongguan	中俄公管	
ZhongE Shuyuan	中俄書院	
zhonggong huanghou	中宫皇后	
Zhonghua minzu	中华民族	
Zhonghua renmin weida fuxing	中华人民伟大复兴	
ZhongRi youhao wanglai	中日友好往来	
ZhongSu youhao tongmeng	中蘇友好同盟	
tiaoyue	條約	
Zhongyao	中药	
zhongyijun	忠義軍	
zhou	州	
Zhou Enlai	周恩来	
Zhu Dehai	朱德海	Kor. Chu Tŏkhae (below)
zhuanqian	赚钱	

Pinyin	Hanzi 汉子/漢字	Additional notes
ziyuan	资源	
zougou	走狗	
zuji	祖籍	

Korean

Romanization (M-R)	Hangeul/ Chosŏn'gŭl한글/ 조선글	Hanja 漢字
annyŏnghasupnikka	안녕하십니까	
Arirang	아리랑	
bŏnho	번호	邊胡
chibang saek	지방색	地方色
chinsŏn	친선	親善
chŏndanggwa on sahoerŭl kim-ilsŏng-kimjŏngilchuŭihwa haja!	전당과 온 사회를 김일성–김정일주의화 하자!	
chŏkch'u	적주	賊主
chŏngmyo horan	정묘호란	丁卯胡亂
Ch'ŏngnyŏn	청년	青年
Chosŏn	조선	朝鮮
Chosŏn'gŭl	조선글	
chosŏn'ot	조선옷	
Chu Tŏkhae	주덕해	朱德海
gun	군	郡
Hamhung (Hamhŭng)	함흥	咸興
Han Ch'angkŏl	한창걸	韓昌傑
hoin	호인	胡人
hoe	회	
ibijŏngbi	이비정비	以匪清匪
inmin	인민	人民
jae'oe dongpo	재외 동포	在外同胞
kangch'ŏrŭi ryŏngjang	강철의 령장	

Romanization (M-R)	Hangeul/ Chosŏn'gŭl 한글/ 조선글	Hanja 漢字
Kim Il Sung	김일성	金日成
Kim Jong Il	김정일	金正日
Kim Jong Un	김정은	金正恩
kisa daeki	기사대기	己巳大飢
Kkot p'anŭn ch'ŏnyŏ	꽃파는처녀	
Koguryŏ	고구려	高句麗
kongbi	공비	共匪
Koryŏ Honggun	고려홍군	高麗紅軍
madabae	맏아배	
madamae	맏아매	
majŏk	마적	馬賊
Manjuttang	만주땅	
Onsŏng	온성	穩城
Paektusan	백두산	白頭山
pijŏk	비적	匪賊
ppalch'isan	빨치산	
Pungnogun jŏngsŏ	북로군정서	北路軍政署
Rajin	라진	羅津
ryŏksa	력사	烈士
Sam-il undong	삼일운동	三一運動
segi	세기	世紀
Segiwa Tŏburŏ	세기와 더불어	
Seungri	승리	
Sŏnbong	선봉	先鋒
sŏllin	선린	善鄰
Soryŏnttang	쏘련땅	
sotoji	소토지	小土地
ssolyŏnŭi onŭlŭn uliŭi laeil ida	쏘련의 오늘은 우리의 래일이다	
Sukchong	숙종	肅宗
sunsu	순수	純粹

Romanization (M-R)	Hanzi 汉子/漢字	Additional notes
t'obi	토비	土匪
Taehan tongnip-gun	대한독립군	大韓獨立軍
Taehanmin'guk Imsi Chŏngbu	대한민국임시정부	大韓民國臨時政府
Tuman'gang	두만강	圖們江
ŭijŏk	의적	義賊
uoŭi bam	우의밤	
Wangjaesan	왕재산	旺載山
Wŏnjŏng	원정	元汀
Yi	리	李
Yŏnbyŏn ilbo	연변일보	延邊日報
yongnap	용납	容納

Japanese

Romanization	Kanji 漢字	Additional notes
kyōsanhi	共産匪	
Mantetsu	満鉄	
Shinkyō	新京	(Ch. Xinjing)

APPENDIX B: TITLES OF SELECTED TREATIES BETWEEN CHINA, RUSSIA, AND KOREA

2001

Treaty of Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation

中华人民共和国和俄罗斯联邦睦邻友好合作条约

Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo he Eluosi lianbang mulin youhao hezuo tiaoyue

Договор о добрососедстве, дружбе и сотрудничестве между Российской Федерацией и Китайской Народной Республикой

Dogovor o dobrososedstve, druzhbe i sotrudnichestve mezhdu Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Kitaiskoi Narodnoi Respublikoi

2000

Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness and Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Договор о дружбе, добрососедстве и сотрудничестве между Российской Федерацией и Корейской Народно-демократической Республикой

Dogovor o druzhbe, dobrososedstve i sotrudnichestve mezhdu Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Koreiskoi Narodnoi Demokraticheskoi Respublikoi

조선민주주의인민공화국과 로씨야련방사이의 친선, 선린 및 협조에 관한 조약

Chosŏn Minjujuŭi Inmin Gonghwagukkwa Rŏshia Yŏnbang saiŭi ch'insŏn, sŏllin mit hyŏpchoe kwanhan choyak

1961

Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance between the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
中华人民共和国和朝鲜民主主义人民共和国友好合作互助条约
Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo he Chaoxian Minzhuzhuyi Renmin Gongheguo youhao hezuo huzhu tiaoyue
조선민주주의인민공화국과 중화인민공화국 간의 우호협조 및 호상원조에 관한 조약
Chosŏn Minjujuŭi Inmin Gonghwagukkwa Chunghwa Inmin Gonghwaguk kanŭi uho hyŏpcho mit hosang wŏnjoe kwanhan choyak

Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Договор о дружбе, сотрудничестве и взаимной помощи между Союзом Советских Социалистических Республик и Корейской Народно-демократической Республикой
Dogovor o druzhbe, sotrudnichestve i vzaimnoi pomoshchi mezhdu Soiuzom Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik i Koreiskoi Narodno-demokraticheskoi Respublikoi
조선민주주의인민공화국과 쏘베트사회주의공화국련맹 간의 우호협조 및 호상원조에 관한 조약
Chosŏn Minjujuŭi Inmin Gonghwagukkwa Ssobet'ŭ Sahoejuŭi Gonghwagung Nyŏnmaeng kanŭi uho hyŏpcho mit hosang wŏnjoe kwanhan choyak

1950

Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the People's Republic of China
中华人民共和国与苏维埃社会主义共和国联盟友好同盟互助条约
Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo yu Suweiai Shehuizhuyi Gongheguo Lianmeng youhao tongmeng huzhu tiaoyue;
Договор о дружбе, союзе и взаимной помощи между Союзом Советских Социалистических Республик и Китайской Народной Республикой
Dogovor o druzhbe, soiuze i vzaimnoi pomoshchi mezhdu Soiuzom Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik i Kitaiskoi Narodnoi Respublikoi

NOTES

Introduction

1. *Madamae* is the Yanbian Korean term for "granny." The male equivalent is *madabae*. All names used throughout the book are pseudonyms.

2. Formally the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I use "North Korea" and "DPRK" for the contemporary state. Correspondingly "South Korea" or "ROK" ("Republic of Korea") will be used for the country to its south.

3. Known in South Korea—and more commonly in English—as hanbok, this is a traditional form of Korean dress whose female version is considerably billowier in Yanbian and North Korea than further south.

4. Aside from local WeChat accounts, the image illustrates the following news story: "'吉林调研' 网评一: 习近平总书记考察吉林延边的深意 ['Jilin investigation' Wang Pingyi: General Secretary Xi Jinping inspects the deeper significance of Yanbian]," *People's Daily* online, July 17, 2015, accessed June 12, 2023, http://opinion.people.com.cn/n/2015/0717/c1003-27322501.html.

5. Local media repeatedly allude to this "frontier minority area" (*bianjiang minzu diqu*) in relation to state-led developmental projects, see "珲春市委召开常委 (扩大) 会议 [Hunchun Municipal Committee Opens Meeting of Standing Committee (Expanded)]," Xinhua wang Jilin pindao, November 2, 2015, accessed August 4, 2017, www.hunchunnet.com/archives/38389.

6. This was mirrored on the Russian side of the border: Kraskino residents had the letters *ПЗ* (*PZ*, *Pogranichnaia zona* ['border zone']) stamped in their passports.

7. A distinction between "old" and recent Han settlers is upheld in various Chinese borderland contexts, including Xinjiang (see Cliff, *Oil and Water*) and Inner Mongolia (see White, *China's Camel Country*).

8. Originally as an autonomous "region" (*qu*) but downgraded in 1955 to prefecture (*zhou*) status, see Koo, *Sound of the Border*, 29.

9. Rampaging young acolytes of Mao early in the Cultural Revolution, see Yang, *Red Guard Generation*.

10. In 1949, when the PRC was founded, Hunchun was almost twice the size of Yanji with a population of 96,664 vs. 52,786; that is now reversed and Yanji's

population of 600,000 is more than double that of Hunchun, see Jin, *Yanbian Statistical Yearbook 2014*, 52.

11. See: Yanbian tianqi 延边天气, 2017, "Hunchun Jintian Tianqi 珲春今天天气 [The Weather Today in Hunchun]," Tianqi.com. http://yanbian.tianqi.com/hunchun/.

12. See, for example, anthropological (Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*) and historical (Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*; Rawski, *Early Modern China and Northeast Asia*) studies of Russian and Chinese margins.

13. "Manchuria" is today a controversial term (see Elliott, *Limits of Tartary*) but is used in parts of this book that focus specifically on the history of the Manchu people to refer to the broad northeastern Chinese region—and sometimes beyond—during the seventeenth through mid-twentieth centuries.

14. 1886 population 12,495; 1909: 19,260; 1917: 46,188; 1935: 85,625, see Li N., *Gazetteer of Hunchun Minzu*, 18–19.

15. A July 11, 2015 Yanbian TV News report focused on error-strewn Korean signage on both private shopfronts and public road signage.

16. For a related place-centered approach, which has also informed mine, see Tuck and McKenzie, *Place in Research*.

17. See Crossley, *Orphan Warriors*, 8–9, on secondary Manchu histories as primary sources.

Chapter 1

1. See Mi Shih, "Making Rural China Urban," *China Story Journal* June 18, 2013, accessed April 10, 2020, https://www.thechinastory.org/2013/06/making-rural-china-urban.

2. See Zhonggong Hunchun Shiwei 中共珲春市委. 2019. "珲春市城市总体规划公示公告 [*Detailed General Program for Hunchun City Is Released and Announced*]," accessed September 5, 2023, http://www.hunchun.gov.cn/zw_1910/tzgg/201912/t20191202_7329.html.

3. See Du Juan. "珲春市规划办提升规划水平 对违章建筑 '零' 容忍 [The Hunchun City Plan Increased the Level of Planning and Takes a 'zero Tolerance' Approach to Rule-Breaking]," Hunchunnet.com, February 14, 2017, accessed August 4, 2017, http://www.hunchun.gov.cn/archives/35950/.

4. Also the case in other "haunted" Asian developmentalist locations, see Johnson, *Ghosts*.

5. Compare Marsden and Reeves, *Marginal Hubs*, on "marginal hubs" elsewhere.

6. Founded in 1860 by Ukrainian settlers as Novokievsk ("New Kiev"), Kraskino was renamed in 1936 after Mikhail Kraskin, a Soviet general who died

in a border skirmish that year and hosts a "brotherly grave" (*bratskaia mogila*) to Kraskin and heroes of the 1938 Battles of Khasan, see Chapter 4.

7. Defense was among the Soviet Far East's dominant sectors, see Park, *One River*, 377.

8. Source: Demoskop Weekly, 2023, *Vsesoiuznaua perepis' naselenie 1989g.* [*All-Union population census 1989*], accessed June 18, 2023, http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus89_reg2.php; and Rosstat, 2023, *Chislennost' postoiannogo naseleniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii po munitsipal'nym obrazovaniem na 1 ianvaria 2023 goda* [*Figures for permanent population of the Russian Federation by municipal entity for January 1, 2023*], accessed June 18, 2023, https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/chisl_MO_Site_01-01-2023.xlsx.

9. From the Korean *hoe* ("raw fish"), a Russian Far Eastern herring and carrot dish.

10. In border towns Suifenhe and Manzhouli this word describes Chinese fixers assisting Russian tourists.

11. See Anil Ananthaswamy, "Welcome to the Age of the Splinternet," *New Scientist*, July 16, 2011, accessed June 19, 2023, https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21128211-900-welcome-to-the-age-of-the-splinternet/.

12. A nickname for Jiang Zemin.

13. See Rose Buchanan, "North Korea Changes Its Time Zone to Combat 'Wicked Japanese Imperialists,'" *The Independent*, August 7, 2015, accessed June 19, 2023, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/north-korea-changes-time-zone-to-combat-wicked-japanese-imperialists-10444841.html; it would revert three years later.

14. This name combines those of two towns Rajin and Sŏnbong (meaning "vanguard").

15. As Chris Miller (2016: 113–117) notes, following a 1988 visit by Gorbachev to Krasnoyarsk, ultimately unrealized Russian Far Eastern development zones included one around Vladivostok and Nakhodka.

16. Beginning in the 1960s, the Military First, or *Sŏngun*, policy diverts resources toward North Korea's army.

17. Another pier is Russian-run and is linked by wide-gauge Russian railway to neighboring Primorye.

18. Korean: *Chŏndanggwa on sahoerŭl kimilsŏng-kimjŏngilchuŭihwa haja!*

19. Comparable gambling enclaves exist across China's southwestern borders too, see Nyiri, *Enclaves of Improvement.*

20. See Anna Liesowska, "Sedated Tigress Causes Shock at Glitzy Grand Opening of Major New Russian Casino," *Siberian Times*, November 13, 2015, accessed June 19, 2023, http://siberiantimes.com/other/others/news/n0489-sedated-tigress-causes-shock-at-glitzy-grand-opening-of-major-new-russian-casino/.

Both casinos were backed by looping arcs of capital from southern China: the Emperor Hotel is a North Korean outpost of the Hong Kong–based Emperor Group. Tigre de Cristal is majority owned by Macanese magnate Lawrence Ho's company Summit Ascent.

21. A Far Eastern Russian slang term from the Chinese *guniang* (girl).

22. Northeastern men are generally taller than the PRC national average. The State Council's 2015 Nutrition and Chronic Diseases Status Report put Jilin province's average height ninth nationwide, with Heilongjiang and Liaoning third and fourth, respectively, see Guojia, "Nutrition and Chronic Disease." Historic source of northeastward Han migrants, Shandong tops the list. Jilin's Korean population likely partially accounts for intra-northeastern differences, see Song, "A Comparison."

23. See Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, 16, on *wen* calligraphy. Jiang Zemin's calligraphy also appears on the "national gate" (*guomen*) between China's Tumen and North Korea's Namyang, close to Hunchun.

Chapter 2

1. Functionalist studies (see Fortes, *Unilineal Descent Groups*; Wolf, *Kinship, Friendship*) generally exclude the possibility of friendship's existence beyond—usually Euro-American—societies, where the absence of lineage obligations frees an individual to pursue volitional, affective non-kin relationships.

2. Signed by Presidents Vladimir Putin and Jiang Zemin; see Appendix B for full title.

3. Signed by Presidents Putin and Kim Jong Il; see Appendix B for full title.

4. The 1961 Sino-Korean Friendship Treaty signed by Mao and Kim remains active, see Chapter 3.

5. These have two Chinese counterparts; Russian/Chinese passengers generally travel on vehicles from their own country.

6. Origins of the owners of 80 percent of China's private hospitals. See Ni Dandan and Yan Jie, "The Opaque Medical Network Behind the Baidu Scandal," *Sixth Tone*, May 4, 2016, accessed June 19, 2023, http://www.sixthtone.com/news/805/opaque-medical-network-behind-baidu-scandal.

7. Russian companies offer different hotel options, departure points, and days, as well as fishing trips (30 RMB/person), night tours of Hunchun (50 RMB), visits to a haunted house (30 RMB), cinema, or Shaolin monk-themed shows.

8. See, for example, Rimma Akhmirova, "Zachem russkie ubegaiut v Kitai [Why Russians Are Running Away to China]," *Sobesednik.ru*, November 3, 2013, accessed June 19, 2023, https://sobesednik.ru/incident/20131103-zachem-russkie-ubegayut-v-kitai; and CNTV, "珲春俄罗斯人的小康生活 [Hunchun Russians' Prosperous Life]," Zou Bian Zhongguo 走遍中国 TV Show, January 29, 2014,

accessed June 19, 2023, http://tv.cntv.cn/video/C10352/0e7d845082474113b5af d4a3f25a068c.

9. This not being a Miévillian (see Miéville, *The City & the City*) urban divide, separations are of course not rigid.

10. For a comparative "European" case, see Brandt, *Among Friends?*, 245–6, on "similarity" among Pākehā and Māori New Zealanders.

11. On a different occasion a Chinese friend, asking whether I knew a Russian of his acquaintance, jogged my memory by mentioning that "he has a beard like Friedrich Engels."

Chapter 3

1. References from *Yanbian ribao* will be made using the format YBRB DD/MM/YYYY: page.

2. Mao, *Strengthen Party Unity and Carry Forward Party Traditions* (1956), in Callahan, *Surpass*, 276.

3. YBRB 5/1/1960: 2

4. Yang Jisheng writes of "sputnik farms" in 1950s Henan in *Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine, 1958–1962*, 25.

5. YBRB 14/1/1959: 2.

6. In both 1944 and 1977 versions, line two of verse two extols the "solid bulwark of Friendship of Peoples" (*druzhba narodov nadezhnyi oplot*).

7. Other scholars have located Uyghur identities in fluid processes entangled with place and religion, see, for example, Thum, *Sacred Routes*.

8. YBRB 21/1/1959: 3.

9. See Appendix B for full title.

10. Rus. *Dogovor o druzhbe, sotrudnichestve i vzaimnoi pomoshchi.*

11. See Appendix B for full titles of both treaties.

12. See Lankov, "Minorities in North Korea," Parts 2 and 3, on the mostly historic Chosŏnjok and Koryŏ saram minorities there.

13. YBRB 3/10/1959: 1

14. YBRB 25/1/1959: 4.

15. See Tyerman, *Internationalist Aesthetics*, on the USSR, and DeMare, *Drama Troupes*, on China.

16. YBRB 13/5/1965: 4.

17. YBRB 3/10/1959: 4.

18. YBRB 3/10/1959: 4.

19. YBRB 7/11/1959; 8/11/1962; 1/5/1965; 4/5/1965; 21/1/1960.

20. YBRB 7/11/1959: 1.

21. Something true of socialist Europe too: see Applebaum, *Friendship Project*, 499.

22. YBRB 7/1/1960; 20/1/1970; 20/5/1965.

23. Note the symbolism of popular socialist realist novel *How the Steel Was Tempered*; steel production mania under Stalin—whose name meant "steel"—and during the Great Leap Forward; or Kim Il Sung's common moniker "the legendary steel-like general" (*kangch'ŏlŭi ryŏngchang*), see Ryang, *Language and Truth*, 149.

24. Script changes and standardization also saw use of Cyrillic to write Mongolian in Inner Mongolia, and the invention of a Russian-derived form of Latinized Chinese, see Y. Li, *China's Soviet Dream*.

25. See: Yanbian weiyuanhui, "我国朝鲜语言文字发展的缘由 [The history of the development of Korean language in our country]," July 30, 2019, accessed June 19, 2023, http://www.ybzx.gov.cn/wenshitiandi/2019-07-30/3662.html.

26. YBRB 6/1/1960: 4.

27. YBRB 12/1/1959: 1.

28. YBRB 14/10/1959: 2.

29. Interethnic Soviet and PRC friendships are also officially unbreakable: the 1977 Soviet national anthem describes an "unbreakable union of free republics" (*Soiuz nerushimyi respublik svobodnykh*), while Chinese minorities have been corralled into "indestructible revolutionary friendship" with the Han, see Bulag, *Politics of Friendship*, 155.

30. Andrei Lankov (pers. comm.) recalls that when studying abroad in "friendly" Pyongyang in 1985 he had to sign a Soviet form committing him to minimize contact with "foreigners."

31. Sino-Soviet Friendship Societies (*obshchestva druzhby*, *youyi xiehui*) organized events across the Soviet Far East and northeast China. Mirroring Soviet film screening in Yanbian, a film festival in Vladivostok marking the PRC's tenth anniversary in 1959 gave many Eastern Russians their first taste of Chinese cinema, see Rykunov, "First Chinese Film Festival."

32. YBRB 5/1/1959; non-simplified characters have been retained from the original.

33. See poster "Welcome the Soviet space rocket rising to the sky (欢呼苏联宇宙火箭上天)" at https://issues.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/N30051003048490_0001_fab-682x1024.jpg, accessed June 18, 2023.

34. As late as 1964 Zhou Enlai visited Moscow for October Revolution anniversary celebrations. Hopes of reconciliation were dashed by hardliners who accompanied him, Soviet inflexibility, and the inebriated rudeness of (Hunchun-connected) Foreign Minister Rodion Malinovskii, see Heinzig, *Arduous Road*.

35. YBRB 4/5/1965.

36. Film titles: *Weida de zhuanzhe*/*Velikii perelom* (1945); *Sidalingele zhanyi*/*Stalingradskaia bitva 1 & 2* (1949); *Tamen you zuguo*/*U nikh est' rodina* (1949); *Yige*

putong de zhanshi/Riadovoi Aleksandr Matrosov (1947); *Fennu de huoxian/Konstantin Zaslonov* (1949); *Zhenchayuan de gongjuan/Podvig razvedchika* (1947); *Malidai zhuan/Marite* (1947).

37. YBRB 27/5/1965: 4.

38. *Guanyu Sidalin wenti* 关于斯大林问题, YBRB 14/9/1963: 2.

39. *Sugong lingdao shi dangdai zuida de fenliezhuyizhe* 苏共领导是当代最大的分裂主义者, YBRB 5/2/1964: 1.

40. YBRB 6/5/1965: 4

41. YBRB 3/6/1975: 1

42. YBRB 4-31/3/1969.

43. YBRB 14/6/1975: 2.

44. Compare Lam, "Sending Films," on the wider importance of revolutionary cinema in the countryside.

45. YBRB 5/6/1975: 3.

46. YBRB 13–14/6/1975: 1.

47. YBRB 28/6/1975: 1.

48. YBRB 16/1/1970.

49. YBRB 3/6/1975: 4.

50. YBRB 12/6/1975: 4.

51. YBRB 13/1/1970: 1.

52. YBRB 8/5/1965: 3.

53. YBRB 30/1/1980: 4.

54. YBRB 12/1/1980: 4.

55. *"'Fada' de luotuo zhuangyuan* '发达' 的骆驼庄园 [*A 'Developed' Camel Ranch*]," YBRB 15/6/1975: 4.

56. See YBRB 7/6/1975; YBRB 11/6/1975.

57. *Yong shenme lai tiaodong sheyuan qunzhong de jijixing* 用什么来跳动社员群众的积极性 [*How to mobilise the enthusiasm of the collective masses*],YBRB 6/6/1975: 3.

58. Xu Qinglong, *Shengchan chuxian xin shuiping* 生产出现新水平[*Production has reached a new level*], YBRB 26/6/1975: 2.

59. See Brook, van Praag, and Boltjes, *Sacred Mandates*, on overlapping East Asian sovereignties.

60. Ch.: *ZhongSu youhao tongmeng tiaoyue*, which included renunciation of Chinese claims to Mongolia.

61. USSR/URSS/UdSSR/SSSR; PRC/RPC/VRC/KNR; DPRK/RPDC/DVRK/KNDR.

62. Ch. *gongheguo*; Kor. *gonghwaguk*; Rus. *sotsialisticheskie respubliki.*

63. The USSR was also no stranger to bailing out its friends as Engels did Marx: "in 1990, the Soviet Union for the first time published a list of the foreign

debts that it was owed, and the total came to 85 billion rubles, of which two-thirds was owed by Moscow's 'friends,'" see Friedman 2015: 219.

64. Aside from parallels with French republican *fraternité*, in Germany, Doris Danzer (*Zwischen Vertrauen*) sees *Brüderlichkeit* as an "emotional keyword" of socialism alongside *Freundschaft*, which emerged from the Christian-inflected codes of nineteenth-century German workers' movements; Marx and Engels sought the *Verbrüderung* of the workers.

65. Prominent examples include bonds among *Water Margin*'s outlaws (see Shi, *Water Margin*, 432), or *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*' "Peach Garden Oath": "although our surnames are different, yet we join up as brothers (*suiran yi xing, ji jie wei xongdi*)."

66. See Appendix B for full title; also MID Rossii, "Dogovor o dobrososedstve [Treaty of Good Neighbourliness]."

67. See Appendix B for full title; also MID Rossii, "Dogovor o druzhbe [Treaty of Friendship]"; and Puk'an, "Puk'an Chishik Sajŏn 북한 지식사전 [North Korea Knowledge Dictionary]."

68. See Appendix B for full title.

69. See "China's Xi awards 'best friend' Putin friendship medal, promises support." Reuters, June 8, 2018, accessed June 12, 2023, available at https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-russia-idUSKCN1J41RO.

70. *Hunchun Gazetteer* records thirty-two "friendly" contests with Russian and North Korean counterparts in football taekwondo, badminton, and ping-pong during 1992–2005, see Zhao, *Hunchun City Gazetteer 1998–2005*, 958–9.

71. See Patrick Brzeski, "China Film Quota Full for 2015, Hollywood Releases Confirmed," *Hollywood Reporter*, October 19, 2015, accessed June 19, 2023, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/china-film-quota-full-2015-832925.

72. CCTV 1, CCTV 2, CCTV 3, CCTV 4, CCTV 5, CCTV 7, CCTV 10, CCTV 12, CCTV 13 吉林卫视. 吉林都市, 延边卫视, 延边新闻综合, 珲春电视台, 珲春点播频道, 珲春电厂新闻, 珲春咨询, 中央教育 1; CCTV Русский included the same coverage but with Russian commentary; CCTV NEWS included the same coverage with English commentary. All the above channels broadcast identical CCTV video footage; channels not showing the parade mostly featured war-based films or documentaries, with the sole exception of the shopping channels 环球购物 and 优购物, which continued advertising bracelets and kitchen utensils.

Chapter 4

1. This account is traduced from Lang, "Anti-Russian Struggle," 82. See also Datsyshen, *The Boxer War*, 4.

2. This information from Priamur Military District Orders 512 & 558 (1900) was obtained from the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg with the generous help of Roman Avilov.

3. See Introduction endnote 13 on the politics of this name.

4. Via a 1712 Qing-Chosŏn border agreement and 1860 Sino-Russian Peking Treaty.

5. Up to 85 percent of "Russian" migrant arrivals, particularly in the Posyot area (map fig. I.3), were Ukrainians from the 1890s to 1910s. As historian Vladimir Datsyshen (*The Boxer War*, 5–6) notes, Russian anti-Boxer forces included "malorossy from the Yellow Sea."

6. Particularly from the port of Yantai from the 1870s, see Gottschang and Lary, *The Great Migration*.

7. During the July 4–8 Blagoveshchensk "Utopia" thousands of Chinese locals were drowned in the river Amur, see Dyatlov, "Blagoveshchensk 'Utopia.'"

8. This term, deriving from the Chinese *honghuzi*—"red-beard"—was so embedded in Russian as to spawn the derivations *khunkhuznichestvo* ("khunzhuz activity"), *khunkhuziada* ("khunkhuz outrage").

9. For a recent treatment of this idea, see Barrow, *Dangerous Class*.

10. See Larin, "'Yellow Peril' Again?".

11. Such concerns have not entirely evaporated, and one recent nationalistically tinged study of *khunkhuzy* uncritically labels the phenomenon "ethnic banditry" (*etnicheskii banditizm*), see Ershov, *Honghuzi: Undeclared War.*

12. On secret societies—frequently conflated with banditry—see Mancall and Jidkoff, "Les Honghuzi."

13. Origin theories of the time suggest that bandits wore false beards (Sokovnin, "Honghuzi of Manchuria," 194), or that labels originally applied to Russians or Jurchens were transferred to Chinese bandits (Murov, *Peoples and Customs*, 60).

14. Even in Arsenev's day Russians were labeled *lotsa-mauza*, an insult combining the indigenous Tungusic term *lotsa* ("Russian") with the Chinese *maozi* ("hairy").

15. Although *Hadji Murat*, Tolstoy's paean to Avar *abrek* heroism, shows romanticized bandit-heroes leapfrogging the bounds of colonial confrontation.

16. Name transcribed from Arsenev's original Cyrillic; characters or pinyin are difficult to ascertain from such sources.

17. See Li D., *Once Upon a Time in Hunchun*; Zhang Enning 张恩宁, "刘单子抗俄 [Bullet Liu Opposes Russia]," *Jilin ribao*, March 24, 2015, accessed August 4, 2017, http://jlrbszb.cnjiwang.com/html/201503/24/content_155125.htm?div=-1.

18. For more comprehensive histories of these conflicts, see Smele, *Russian Civil Wars* on Russia; Westad, *Decisive Encounters* on China; and Park, *Two Dreams* on Korea.

19. Just as *bianjiang* and *jiangchang* share the morpheme *jiang* (疆) indicating their common status as arenas of action, English's *frontier* and *front* are also etymologically cognate, both implying areas in which an Other is con*front*ed.

20. Once exiled in China, anti-tsarist political dissidents, from Bolsheviks to Socialist Revolutionaries and anarchists, returned through Vladivostok after February 1917 to foment revolution, see Pak (ed.), *Land of Free Hope*.

21. Reacting to Russia's withdrawal from WWI, they were later joined by expeditionary Czech, Polish, Chinese, Serbian, British, French, and Canadian troops, see Stephan, *Russian Far East*, 126–132.

22. Such scholarship often draws on the post-war terrestrially focused works *Theorie des Partisanen* (1963) and *Der Nomos der Erde* (1950) of Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt, a theoretician popular among today's Beijing political dramaturgs.

23. The revolutionary era spawned the "Green Wedge" (Ukr. *Zeleny klyn*) secession movement, which, based in Nikol'sk-Ussuriiskii, sought to establish a "Ukrainian Republic of the Far East," see Smele, *Historical Dictionary*, 476.

24. Run since the 1880s by Swiss-born industrialist Yurii Brynner, grandfather of Hollywood actor Yul.

25. Harnessing bandits as partisans was an ironic tactic in a socialist context, since it had been Mikhail Bakunin, 1850s visitor to the Russian Far East and bugbear of Russian Marxism, who had argued, against Marx, that the bandit (*razboinik*) was "the genuine and sole revolutionary," see Marx and Engels, "Alliance of Social Democracy," 414.

26. A 1924 Sino-Soviet treaty obliged Russians to choose Soviet citizenship or remain stateless. Many selected the latter.

27. A. Hamish Ion (see *Cross and the Rising Sun*, 197) estimates that the Provisional Government had marshaled 2,600 partisans by 1920.

28. Cited further below, Kim Il Sung's *With the Century* has eight volumes, each comprising three sub-books. References here follow the format volume-book: page.

29. Luo left Manchuria for Shanghai in his twenties, and his work is characterized by what Charles Laughlin (see *Chinese Reportage*, 170) terms "rhetoric of bad conscience," the narrative position of guilt-ridden intellectuals living far from the oppressed masses.

30. A historical name for Korea.

31. See Coox (*Anatomy of a Small War*) for a Japanese source-based account.

Chapter 5

1. Known in both Koreas as the East Sea (*Tonghae*); my use of Sea of Japan here reflects Chinese use of *Ribenhai* (also that of Yanbian Koreans, who call it *Ilbonhae*), not a position in the politicized naming dispute.

2. See Klein, "Everyday Approaches," on the interplay of food safety concerns, localism, and ideas of individualized consumerism.

3. Comparable trends are evident within China where *minzu* identities classified under state socialism are now marketed back to the Han center through minority tourism, see Chio, *Landscape of Travel*.

4. Wang's application of the term (see *Empire and Local Worlds*, 223–4) refers to the signs, symbols, sacred places, and reinvented rituals through which the Qing enacted and represented their rule. This is not to suggest that Russian, Korean, or indeed Soviet, PRC, or DPRK governance have been any less cosmological, but the term here has particular Qing significance.

5. "Manchuria" arose as a label from the 1690s with increasing Qing interest in mapping their ancestral homeland, see Introduction endnote 13 on the politics of the name.

6. See also Crossley, *Translucent Mirror*, 35fn.

7. Among other problems, surveys were hampered by Qing representative Mukedeng breaking his teeth in a boat and Korean delegate Pak Kwŏn being too frail to accompany Mukedeng up Changbaishan, see Schmid, "Tributary Relations."

8. Many local Manchu toponyms persist locally today, see Yu, ed., *Hunchun's Manchus*, 127–9; see Appendix for alternative Chinese characters used for "Hunchun."

9. See Baidu 百度. "Dongbei Diqu 东北地区 [The Northeastern Region]." Baidu Baike 百度百科, accessed June 19, 2023, http://baike.baidu.com/view/2748260.htm.

10. Chen's figures are drawn from Chosŏn records of "Jurchen" (*hoin*) movements.

11. See Elliott, *Manchu Way*, 85; and Lattimore, *Wulakai Tales*, on banner divisions and incorporation of non-Manchus.

12. Mostly known as *Manwen*, this is also termed *Qingwen*—"Qing language"—attesting to elisions of Qing, Manchu, and banner identity.

13. Until the 1990s the Tumen's periodic changes in course and flooding meant that Fangchuan was often unreachable without crossing Russian territory, see Jin, *Jilin's Chosŏnjok*.

14. Sourced from Yangpao Manchu Museum discussed below.

15. 1803 saw a partial relaxation in western Jilin, see Jin and Huang, *Hunchun Literary and Historical Materials,* Vol. II, 89.

16. The character *shen* 參 appears in both *haishen* (sea cucumber) and *renshen* (ginseng).

17. Hunchun gained only 150 armed infantrymen (*jiabing*), two guardsmen (*fangyu*), and three cavalrymen (*xiaoqi*) under three *zuoling* (deputies to the *xieling*) in the 1714 deployment. The following year 40 infantrymen were dispatched from Ninguta, with further additions in 1752 (60 infantrymen), and 200 reservists added in two separate deployments in 1760–1 (see Yu, *Hunchun's Manchus*, 16–17), although 20 of these were subsequently redeployed to Heilongjiang.

18. Elliott (see *Manchu Way*, 119–121) calculates that Xi'an had 10,000 and Beijing over 600,000 banner troops.

19. Now known as the Hezhe, see Pulford, "Material States."

20. See Millward, "We Need a New Approach to Teaching Modern Chinese History: We Have Lazily Repeated False Narratives for Too Long," Medium, October 8, 2020, accessed June 19, 2023, https://jimmillward.medium.com/we-need-a-new-approach-to-teaching-modern-chinese-history-we-have-lazily-repeated-false-d24983bd7ef2.

21. The population sells local corn to a nearby noodle factory and cultivates ginseng, *mu'er* mushrooms, cabbages, chili peppers, silkworms, cattle, deer, and edible frogs.

22. By the late Qing, bannermen's purported lack of productive activity and their military stipend-sustained lifestyles saw them widely reviled for their indolence, a fact perhaps most famously portrayed in Manchu author Lao She's 1962 autobiographical account of Beijing Manchu life, *Beneath the Red Banner*.

23. See Kim, "A Garrison in Time," on similar garrison construction in Heilongjiang.

24. Aleksandr Borodin's *In the Steppes of Central Asia*.

25. See Burton, "Treaty of Aigun, 1858," for treaty text.

26. Further representing the global entanglement of Hunchun, this was part of a wider Convention of Peking involving France and Britain. As well as Far Eastern territory, the tsarist empire gained concessions from the Qing in Central and Inner Asia. Britain and France sought port access at Tianjin, and additional British territory at Hong Kong. Russian treaty texts available in Ravenstein, *Russians on the Amur*, 151–153.

27. Such trends can be compared to long-standing Chinese state use of military-agricultural settlements, including up to the present through the Production and Construction Corps (*bingtuan*) in Xinjiang, see Cliff, *Oil and Water*.

28. As Shan (see *Taming China's Wilderness*, 113) notes, some northeastern banners categorically prohibited learning Chinese until 1910.

29. This is partly because not all arrived between the 1870s and 1890s. Many also came from Japanese-occupied Korea in the twentieth century.

Conclusion

1. Source: CGTN America, "Full Text of Xi Jinping keynote at the World Economic Forum," 2017, accessed June 18, 2023, https://america.cgtn.com/2017/01/17/full-text-of-xi-jinping-keynote-at-the-world-economic-forum.

2. As the 2010-built Ulanhot-Hunchun G12 highway (ninety minutes to Yanji) did before it.

3. Some salespeople ply trades serially in the arc of Sino-Russian border towns such as Suifenhe or Dongning.

4. 2010 figures: Jilin 27.5 million; Heilongjiang 38.3 million; Liaoning 43.8 million.

5. See STCN, "人口外流：东北三省十年净减少超千万 [Population outflow: the three northeastern provinces have lost over 10 million in a decade]," 2021, accessed June 18, 2023, https://news.stcn.com/sd/202110/t20211004_3736285.html.

6. See *Chosun Ilbo*, "한국 거주 조선족 70만명…"中 옌벤보다 韓에 더 많다 [700,000 Chosŏnjok living in Korea . . . 'There are more in Korea than in Yanbian, China']," January 19, 2022, accessed June 18, 2023, https://biz.chosun.com/international/international_general/2022/01/19/7Y4XIPB6X5HKLCM7ZV2SJYBRKI/; *Yazhou ribao*, "赶超延边！韩国常居朝鲜族人口突破70万 [Overtaking Yanbian! Chosŏnjok permanently living in Korea breaks through 700,000]," January 20, 2022, accessed June 18, 2023, https://www.yazhouribao.com/view/20220120082555205.

7. Source: Jl.gov.cn (Jilin provincial government). "延边朝鲜族自治州2020年国民经济和社会发展统计公报 [Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture 2020 Citizen, Economic and Social Development Statistics Report]," 2021, accessed February 7, 2022, http://jl.gov.cn/mobile/sj/sjcx/ndbg/gdzs/202106/t20210611_8102119.html.

8. Allowances have been made here for the addition of two new regions, Buryatia and Sakha, to the district.

9. See *Vedomosti*, "Naselenie Rossii vpervye za 15 let snizilos' bolee chem na 500,000 chelovek [Russia's population has fallen by over 500,000 for the first time in 15 years]," January 28, 2021, accessed June 18, 2023, .https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/news/2021/01/28/855817-naselenie-rossii-vpervie-za-15-let-snizilos-bolee-chem-na-500-000-chelovek.

10. North Hamgyŏng's 1987 population of 2 million (see Eberstadt and Banister, *Population of North Korea*, 15) had increased by a modest 16.2 percent to 2.33 million by 2008 (see Central Bureau of Statistics, *DPR 2008 Population Census*, 18). Over the same period the DPRK's national population increased by 24.3 percent, from 19.3 million in 1987 (see Eberstadt and Banister, *Population of North Korea*, 15) to 24.1 million in 2008 (see Central Bureau of Statistics, *DPR 2008 Population Census*, 14).

11. Big cities in northeast China and the Russian Far East have also retained population, or even grown, while rural areas empty out in recent decades.

12. See Li Jinlei 李金磊, "东北流失的人口都去哪了? 海南真的成为 '东四省' 了吗? [Where have all the people from Dongbei gone? Has Hainan really become 'the fourth northeastern province'?]" Sohu.com, June 19, 2022, accessed June 18, 2023, https://www.sohu.com/a/558774060_115479.

13. See same source as previous endnote.

14. See official information on site of Corporation for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic, https://erdc.ru/about-tor/, accessed June 18, 2023.

15. See scheme official site at https://надальнийвосток.рф, accessed June 18, 2023.

16. See RBC, "Dal'nevostochnyi gektar: kak poluchit' besplatno zemliu I den'gi na osvoenie [Far Eastern Hectare: how to get free land and money to colonize it]," January 27, 2022, accessed June 18, 2023, https://realty.rbc.ru/news/603928ec9a79478e5d926c23.

17. Source: Gov.cn. "发展改革委回应'1.6万亿救东北'：不是 ' 输血式' 资金投入 [The Development and Reform Commission responds to '1.6 trillion to save the northeast': this not 'blood transfusion-style' financial investment]," August 25, 2016, accessed June 18, 2023, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2016-08/25/content_5102274.htm.

18. I mostly use the Chinese appellation "Bohai" here, since most of my research was conducted in China; this is not a judgement on whether it was "Chinese" or "Korean." Other nearby Bohai sites include the hilltop Saqi fort near the single-lane road running north between the Hunchun River and the Russian border to eastern Heilongjiang, see Yang et al, eds., *Hunchun County's Cultural Artifacts*, 43–44.

19. Tang sources identify up to fifteen Bohai provinces, see Ogata, "Shangjing Longquanfu."

20. For the Liao and Jin these include the ancient settlements (*cheng*) of Yingchengzi, Gan'gouzi, Caomaodingzi; for the Eastern Xia the defunct fortified settlement of Peiyou and for the Yuan and Ming the still-existing Sanjiazi Manchu village, Donggangzi village and others. After Bohai, the Khitan Liao state (907–1125), which succeeded it, the Jurchen Jin (1115–1234) and Mongol Yuan (1271–1368) were largely continentally oriented polities, and the Hunchun area was named variously Shuaibinfu or Hailan. Shuaibinfu was in the Liao Dongjing province; Hailan/Helan district in the Jin-era Shangjing region; under the Yuan it was part of Liaoyang province.

21. Often named after nearby rivers, outposts established between 1409 and 1411 included Mila, Wu'erhunshan, and Tongkenshan (Li S. 1991: 39–42).

22. Sinocentric accounts by non-Chinese historians have also supported this view: Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, for example, see Bohai primarily in terms of "China," placing it outermost in a "multilayered" frontier, beyond civil government or military defense but within a Tang tribute zone, see Twitchett et al., *Cambridge History of China*, 8.

23. In the months after my visit to the museum, the past was due to burst out of its gloomy confines with Hunchun's Museum (and archives) moving to a vast new complex, see Song Ziyan 宋子琰, "珲春 '三馆一中心' 项目进展顺利 [Hunchun's 'Three Halls, One Centre' Project Making Smooth Progress]," *Yanbian xinwen wang*, July 8, 2015, accessed August 4, 2017, http://www.ybnews.cn/news/local/201507/244183.html.

24. See Sang-hee Han, "Balhae's Castle Site Found in Russia," *Korea Times*, October 16, 2008, accessed June 18, 2023, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/art/2023/06/398_32837.html.

25. In April 2017 Xi Jinping told Donald Trump Korea was once part of China. See Kanga Kong, "South Korea Tells Trump It's Actually Never Been a Part of China." Bloomberg, April 20, 2017, accessed June 18, 2023, https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-04-20/south-korea-tells-trump-it-s-actually-never-been-a-part-of-china.

26. Source: "' *Dal'nii Vostok zhdet vas!' Kak mariupol'tsy ishchut novuiu zhizn' za 10,000 kilometrov ot doma* ['The Far East awaits you!' How Mariupol citizens are seeking a new life 10,000 km from home]," Pravmir, June 2022, accessed June 18, 2023, https://www.pravmir.ru/dalnij-vostok-zhdet-vas-kak-mariupolczy-ishhut-novuyu-zhizn-za-10-000-kilometrov-ot-doma/.

27. Source: State Council of the PRC, "Resolution of the CPC Central Committee on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century," November 16, 2021, accessed June 18, 2023, https://english.www.gov.cn/policies/latestreleases/202111/16/content_WS6193a935c6d0df57f98e50b0.html.

28. Source: *The Little Red Podcast*, November 21, 2021 (38:30; 48:00), accessed June 18, 2023, https://omny.fm/shows/the-little-red-podcast/the-great-reconciler-and-the-end-of-chinese-histor.

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WHILE ANXIETY ABOUNDS IN THE OLD COLD WAR WEST THAT PROGRESS—WHETHER political or economic—has stalled or been put into reverse, for citizens of formerly socialist countries, murky temporal trajectories are nothing new. Grounded in the multiethnic frontier town of Hunchun at the triple border of China, Russia, and North Korea, Ed Pulford traces how several of global history's most ambitiously totalizing progressive endeavors have ended in cataclysmic collapse here. From the Japanese empire which banished Qing, Tsarist, and Choson dynastic histories from the region, through Chinese, Soviet, and Korean socialisms, these borderlands have seen projections and disintegrations of forward-oriented ideas accumulate on a grand scale.

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