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Uncovering the Story of Chaoxianzu Resilience: the Korean Minority in China under Mao

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Abstract:

A researcher studying the first Korean immigrants to China in the 1800s might have reasonably concluded that the immigrants would not survive for long. Immigrant cultures were often assimilated into the dominant Han Chinese majority, or even completely destroyed. Many earlier Korean immigrants faced the same fate, getting absorbed into larger ethnic groups in North China. However, the Korean immigrants defied this cycle and became an outstanding example of resilience, adapting and surviving the changing political environment of Mao's China (1949-1976). Moreover, there are 55 minority ethnicities in China, most of which have peaceful relations with the Han majority and the government. Yet Mao singled out the Korean immigrants as the state's model for all other minority groups—a model minority. This raises the question: what made the Korean Chinese population so special?

There are varying names for this minority: some sources refer to the group simply as "Korean Chinese," yet others refer to the community as the "Chaoxianzu," or "Joseonjok." Despite the romanization differences between the Chinese (Chaoxianzu) and Korean (Joseonjok) terms, both phrases signify "the People of Joseon," distinctly identifying the origins of these people as Ancient Korea. This essay will refer to the community as the Chaoxianzu to celebrate their impressive resilience in adapting to their surroundings while maintaining their rich Korean culture to survive the changing political climate of China.

Keywords: Chaoxianzu (Joseonjok);Cultural Revolution; Model minority; Assimilation; Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (YKAP)

Introduction

The brilliant five-star red flag of the People's Republic of China is stained with the blood of the Chaoxianzu revolutionary martyrs.

Mao Ze Dong, Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party and the Founder of the People's Republic of China.

Mao's words echo the importance of the Chaoxianzu within greater China. Yet why did he personally endorse this minority? Perhaps it was to honor the efforts of Chaoxianzu, who fought alongside the Communist Party of China (CPC) against Japanese imperialism and the Kuomintang Nationalist Party (KMT). Seeking acceptance in Chinese society and a path to social mobility as a minority, the Chaoxianzu placed their trust in Mao's lofty promises of ethnic equality and autonomy. They, thereby, supported the CPC's vision of Communist China. Yet when the Cultural Revolution began, these promises were broken, and the Chaoxianzu faced the harsh realities of forced assimilation and censorship. They became scapegoats of capitalism and were subjected to unfair suppression and persecution. Consequently, the Chaoxianzu were pressured to adapt to the threats to their physical and cultural survival.

Even today, typing the key terms "Cultural Revolution" and "Korean Chinese" into China's leading search engine, Baidu yields limited results. Almost no non-governmental sources report on the status of the Chaoxianzu community during this tumultuous period that began in 1966 and lasted for an entire decade. Through heavy media censorship, the CPC continues to evade these painful histories. Indeed, the National Ethnic Affairs Commission's (NEAC) report on the history of Yanbian—a concentrated area of Chaoxianzu—merely brushes over the Cultural Revolution.

The NEAC only briefly mentions the outlawing of Xiangdu, the Chaoxianzu funeral rite where an elder is appointed to organize funerals for the community and manage the "Sangyu" (Chaoxianzu funeral palanquin). The source justifies the censorship, arguing that although many Chaoxianzu in rural areas tried to preserve this practice, it was a "feudal superstition" that needed to be eradicated. Here, a significant Chaoxianzu custom was banned and dismissed, devalued as mere remnants of an outdated superstition. Yet this was only the beginning of the censorship and suppression faced by the Chaoxianzu. While it is widely acknowledged that the Cultural Revolution was far from perfect, its impact on China's Chaoxianzu minority remains under-discussed, under-studied, and under-reported.

The Chaoxianzu has a rich and vibrant history, fueled by successive waves of migration that took place over centuries. By the early 1950s, the Chaoxianzu enjoyed certain privileges, including legal recognition by the Chinese government and respect from mainstream society. As mentioned earlier, this was perhaps best exemplified in their status as a "model minority." In contrast to other minorities, they largely complied with the Communist agenda and were able to achieve tremendous socio-economic success under CPC leadership. Beginning with the Cultural Revolution in 1966, however, Mao's policies toward the community grew more assimilative and oppressive. Consequently, the Chaoxianzu community's local autonomy and ability to freely practice Korean culture and traditions became limited. This paper examines the effects on the Chaoxianzu communities incurred by Mao's changing attitude and policies. Furthermore, it explores how the community navigated and survived the political and cultural landscape of the Cultural Revolution.

The Birth of the Chaoxianzu Community

During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) and the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), succeeding waves of migration significantly boosted the Korean immigrant population in China. Korean immigrants primarily settled in the Northern region known as Manchuria, which today is comprised of the three provinces of Dongbei: Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning. Notably, the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (YKAP) in Eastern Jilin became home to the highest concentration of Chaoxianzu population. Before the late 19th century, Korean migrants were primarily prisoners of war due to conflicts between China and Korea. Others were peasants who voluntarily moved to northeastern China to escape heavy government taxation and seek new land after natural disasters. According to Peace Bakwon Lee's A Performance Analysis of Chaoxianzu Oral Traditions in Yanbian, these migrants became mostly assimilated with other ethnic groups such as the "Manchus and Han." These early immigrants did not embody the pivotal characteristics of unity and coherence. Yet this would most certainly change for the Chaoxianzu community.

The next decades would bring dramatic changes to the land and its inhabitants. Japanese ambitions for regional domination led to the annexation of Korea in 1910, followed by the annexation of Manchuria in 1931. The resulting destabilization, poverty, and fears of further conflict triggered another massive wave of Korean migration to China. Despite making permanent residence in these areas, these immigrants did not abandon their resourcefulness and loyalty to their homeland upon their departure.

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Instead, they formed unified communities contrary to the assimilative characteristics of earlier waves of migrants. Their ability to maintain a distinct cultural identity in a foreign setting was nothing short of impressive.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the Korean community was their unshakeable sense of unity. Although the ethnic Koreans migrated to the northeastern regions of China in successive waves and from different parts of both Northern and Southern Korea, they were able to establish a strong sense of community in their new homeland. Upon arrival, various Korean groups often cast aside their previous geographical and cultural differences. They cooperated to build a frontier economy centered around rice farming on paddies rented from local Han Chinese landlords. Chaoxianzu immigrants cultivated extensive amounts of unused land in northern China and developed wet-rice farming techniques. During the early 20th century, the Chaoxianzu became recognized by the Han Chinese farmers for their creativity and hard work in boosting production and reclaiming unused land. By collaborating as a cohesive community, the Chaoxianzu contributed significantly to agricultural development and became crucial members of a foreign ecosystem.

An Unlikely Friendship Blossoms

Since 1927, the Kuomintang Nationalist Party (KMT) took a heavily assimilative approach toward minorities. Nation-building plans of Nationalist leaders such as Sun Yat-sen, former president of the Republic of China, encouraged minorities to assimilate into the dominant Han culture in order to politically and culturally unify China. For instance, the Chaoxianzu were even pressured to adopt Han last names. Such efforts demonstrate KMT's intent to erase visible markers of ethnic distinction and homogenize the population under Han cultural norms. Expectedly, these assimilative policies did not appeal to the Chaoxianzu community.

Thereby, the Communist Party of China's (CPC) calls for minority rights and freedom spoke to the interests of the Chaoxianzu minority. The early Communist Party, which opposed the dominant power of the KMT, needed the backing of minorities. Therefore, they supported more liberal policies. The Chinese Soviet Republic Constitution of 1931 promised "all minorities the right to secede from China and pledged that the Communists would assist the minorities to overthrow their rulers and to develop their cultures and languages." Notably, as revealed in Claremont McKenna Professor Chae-jin Lee's book China's Korean Minority, when the CPC set up a Northeast People's Administrative Council and launched a massive anti-illiteracy campaign in Northeast China, the platform not only assured "reasonable protection" for the Korean people, but also pledged to "respect the languages, cultures, religions, and customs of minority nationalities." Although these pledges were not fully granted and proved impermanent, promises of autonomy and freedom to practice their own culture attracted the support of the Korean diaspora at the time.

The Chaoxianzu acknowledged the CPC's principles that emphasized minority equality. A retired Chaoxianzu Professor "X", who lived through Mao's rule, asserted that "… The early Communist Party's policies didn't discriminate between Han Chinese and Koreans in terms of food or clothing. I think there was less discrimination against ethnic groups than in any other country. He further revealed that "the Korean immigrants were often exploited by the Han landlords … and the Communist Party promised to break down the existing order and distribute the land to the poor" Professor "X" highlighted how the Chaoxianzu felt more represented by the Communist party that offered them means to obtain land, contrary to the Han-dominated status quo under the KMT.

Subsequently, the Chaoxianzu collaborated closely with the CPC. They fought alongside the CPC during the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949) with the KMT. This participation reflected the Chaoxianzu's allegiance and reinforced the positive relationship blossoming between the CPC and the Chaoxianzu. Notably, impromptu militias and military organizations for the newly born CPC were often "led by ethnic Koreans rather than Han Chinese" in Yanbian. The sacrifices and contributions of the Chaoxianzu remained consistent throughout the war efforts, with almost 97 percent of those killed in Yanbian during the Chinese Civil War being Koreans. Furthermore, Professor "T" revealed:

If you go to the hills of every village [in Yanbian], there is a revolutionary monument. There are azaleas on every mountain and a memorial in every village to celebrate these fallen Chaoxianzu soldiers. So I think that the red five-star flag of China is also made up of the sweat, sacrifice, and effort of the Chaoxianzu.

The loyalty shown by the Chaoxianzu was pivotal for their acceptance into mainstream society, paving the way for their recognition by the CPC. Moreover, given the contributions and losses of the Chaoxianzu during the struggle against Japanese imperialism, the recognition from the CPC was compounded. In return, when the CPC rose to power, they granted the Chaoxianzu minority the autonomy and respect promised during the campaign. For one, the Chaoxianzu were —to some extent— excluded from the CPC's rapid industrialization reforms. In his October 1951 address at the Third Meeting of the National Committee of the Political Consultative Conference, Chairman Mao noted that land reforms would be complet-

ed by the end of 1952. He then gave exceptions for "the areas inhabited by minority nationalities." Unfortunately, these benefits did not last.

In addition to exceptions from mainstream industrialization quotas, the Chaoxianzu community was rewarded with some degree of political agency. On September 3, 1952, Yanbian was formally recognized as the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (YKAP), and the Korean migrants were given full legal status. Moreover, the Chaoxianzu even received the right to local political autonomy. By 1955, ethnic Koreans held 76 percent of the local political positions within Yanbian's Prefecture Party Committee, with over 75 percent in the agricultural, economic, and legal departments as well as 87 percent in the cultural and educational departments. Until the Cultural Revolution, the highest position of the Committee was never once handed to a Han Chinese member, demonstrating impressive political representation. Importantly, with formal recognition and representation in the local government, the Chaoxianzu were able to receive more favorable treatment from the local administration.

The local government provided the Chaoxianzu community with opportunities to gain the respect of the mainstream Han Chinese society. As rice became the most lucrative crop in Yanbian's agricultural sector, demand for more efficient cultivation methods grew. Recognizing the Chaoxianzu expertise in advanced wet rice farming, the government created programs where Chaoxianzu farmers were sent to nearby Han villages to spread their effective and profitable methods. This initiative not only heightened agricultural yields but positioned the Chaoxianzu minority as crucial contributors to regional prosperity. Consequently, this facilitated the widespread acceptance of Chaoxianzu farmers, building a foundation for a mutually beneficial relationship with the Han Chinese.

The growing recognition and respect from the Han Chinese extended beyond the agricultural sector, allowing the Chaoxianzu to preserve and promote their rich cultural identity. Following the Korean War in 1953, Chaoxianzu culture and education were able to flourish. According to Lee, Chaoxianzu novels, essays, and poems "contained a unique Korean flavor; they depicted the heroic history of Koreans' anti-Japanese struggles, praised Koreans' independent-minded character and strong ethnic identity, and encouraged the preservation of Korean social values and customs." The essence of Lee's argument is that the vibrant tapestry of literature from this period demonstrates the tenacity with which the Chaoxianzu retained the culture of their homeland. To preserve and spread Korean culture in China, the Chaoxianzu formed the Yanbian Branch of the Chinese Writers' Association and the Association for Korean Folk Literature. Such organizations worked to develop Korean cultural libraries and museums, revive folk festivals and athletic events, and promote traditional performing arts within the Chaoxianzu community.

As a traditional tale goes, a North Korean farmer, newly arrived in China, grafted a Korean apple onto a Chinese pear, creating a delicious new fruit that contained the flavor of both parent fruits. This new, amalgamated fruit parallels the experience of the Chaoxianzu in China—the Korean migrants maintained the unique "flavor" of their roots while adapting to their new environment. Moreover, the relationship between the Chaoxianzu and the Han Chinese people was mutually beneficial: the Han Chinese were able to benefit from the economic advantages brought by the Korean migrants' agricultural methods, while the migrants, in return, were able to enjoy the legal recognition, political representation, and respect from the Han Chinese community. The interactions, at least on the surface, seemed to enrich both stakeholders.

Many Strings Attached

Beyond the surface, however, the citizenship and acceptance offered to the Chaoxianzu had many strings attached. These benefits were highly contingent on their submission to the CPC and the socialist system of rule. In Park Woo's study of the Yanbian Koreans' citizenship, he found that the Koreans gained politico-cultural citizenship based on: "(1) their adjustment to the system of people's communes …, (2) their contribution to the state's construction of a socialist system, and … (3) their willingness as proletariats to have ideology guide their actions." Therefore, the legal citizenship offered to the Chaoxianzu came with many conditions. Not only did they have to submit to the socialist working system, but the Chaoxianzu had to prove their commitment to the socialist proletariat ideologies as a minority.

While the Chaoxianzu were legal citizens, their inclusion demanded degrees of ideological and cultural assimilation. In the first place, the Chaoxianzu—unlike other minorities such as the Tibetans—rarely challenged the central government and shared Han Confucian values that emphasized "work ethic, education, family and community, and self-sufficiency." Additionally, rather than wearing traditional Korean styles of clothing, Chaoxianzu men and women adopted standardized attire; women kept their hair short to overtly show their support. Some even carried Mao's little red book of quotes and ideologies in their breast pocket. Such outward displays of ideological loyalty helped the Chaoxianzu actively engage with Socialist ideals encouraged by the party. Yet these actions also demonstrate the sacrifices of self-expression and cultural preservation necessary for the Chaoxianzu to ensure their inclusion into the Socialist society. As such, the CPC

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considered the Chaoxianzu their ideal, or model, minority. As expressed by Amanda Conklin in Makings of a Modern "Model Minority," the CPC needed "to show that its 'enlightened' nationality policy brought about minority success, and who was better to demonstrate the positive consequences of their policy than the ethnic Koreans?" Their high levels of societal obedience were used by the CPC as an exemplar of their success in minority reform and set a standard for other minorities in China to study and emulate.

Moreover, the Chaoxianzu boasted of a culture that prioritized education. They yielded exceptional educational accomplishments and high literacy rates. The Chaoxianzu had the highest level of college attendance and the lowest illiteracy rates in a bilingual education system that taught students both Mandarin and Korean languages. Influenced by Korean confucian values in prioritizing education, they excelled in the education system despite living in a foreign setting. Even China's Renmin Ribao (People's Daily) published a front-page article that praised the Chaoxianzu in Yanbian for their exceptional values, reporting that "the Korean people in Yanbian have a laudable tradition of emphasizing education." However, the article framed their exceptional educational achievements as a highly contributing stimulus for the Communist modernization agenda. This primary source is significant, as it demonstrates how the press utilized Chaoxianzu's success as a publicity tool, rather than attributing Chaoxianzu's success to their cultural values. They praised and encouraged aspects of the Chaoxianzu community in a way that benefited the CPC agenda.

The state-controlled narrative had deeper implications for the Chaoxianzu's cultural identity. The minority was framed as a model of the Communist government's success in minority policies. Minister of Education Ma Xunlun even used the term "model minority" in "official rhetoric to point to ethnic Koreans as a model for minority education." Not only did the Chinese government use the Chaoxianzu as an example of success for other minorities, but they also used the minority as a tool for propaganda. By crediting Communist policies rather than acknowledging Chaoxianzus' resilience and cultural values, the government undermined the importance of Korean traditions. Yonbyon Kyoyuk (Yanbian Education), a state-sponsored Korean-language magazine, attributed the Chaoxianzu educational achievements "to the wise leadership exercised by the [CPC] and the State." Through such propaganda, the government erased the agency of the Chaoxianzu community in shaping their own success. This justification reduced the space for Korean language and literature within education as the Chinese political atmosphere shifted.

Perhaps a more fitting metaphor for the complex and evolving relationship between the CPC and the Chaoxianzu during this period would be the Myunrilon (daughter-in-law) Theory. Coined by Chaoxianzu intellectual Cheong Panryong, the metaphor draws a comparison between the Chaoxianzu and a newlywed woman in the context of Confucian patriarchal norms. In traditional Korean households, the Myunrilon has to listen to the whims of the mother-in-law to become accepted into the husband's family, which in this case was the CPC. Minority migrants must adhere to the rules and expectations of the CPC to obtain acceptance and earn their place in the "family." This was demonstrated by the compromises of the Chaoxianzu in adopting socialist practices, altering traditional customs, and aligning themselves with the ideological expectations of the CPC. Unfortunately, despite their efforts, the Chaoxianzu's acceptance into the family did not last long.

Promises Start to Shatter

During the early years of CPC rule, the Chaoxianzu, alongside other minority groups in China, enjoyed degrees of autonomy and cultural tolerance. However, these policies grew more assimilative and repressive over time. For instance, beginning in the mid-1950s, Mao started to pursue more aggressive socialist economic policies that confiscated land from minorities. This confiscation affected the ethnic Korean peasants who had obtained land through the reforms of the 1940s and relegated them to the standing of serfs.

On April 25, 1956, as recorded in The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao, Mao introduced the Hundred Flowers Campaign and stated, "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend." Different minorities were encouraged to offer criticism and feedback towards the CPC and its governance. This campaign was initially viewed as a progressive opportunity through which minority voices could be amplified and heard by the Han Chinese central government. Buying into the promise of free speech, many minorities expressed desires for more independence and increased representation in their local government. Some even expressed objections to policies that increased assimilation with the Han Chinese. In particular, minorities opposed the acculturation taking place through the influx of Han settlers into their region and the imposition of increased mandatory language studies. The Chaoxianzu was one of these minorities, opposing the CPC policy of mixed-nationality cooperatives, where the Chaoxianzu were often pressured to "forsake their traditional exclusive social habits." This exposed crevices in the relationship between the Chaoxianzu and the CPC and signaled the beginning of their deteriorating ties.

Rather than reacting constructively towards solicited feedback, the CPC buried the criticism and further centralized power. In June of 1957, Mao published an article in Renmin Ribao (People's Daily), ironically calling people who had spoken up during his own campaign "enemies and rightists." The impact of this on ethnic minorities, including the Chaoxianzu, was unprecedented. In response, anti-rightist campaigns were launched in minority areas, including in Chaoxianzu-inhabiting areas like Yanbian, to lower local nationalism and remove minority leaders from local positions. Chaoxianzu leaders were falsely accused of curruption, becoming political scapegoats used to push forward the CPC agenda of centralizing power away from the local governments. This became particularly true during the onset of Mao's Cultural Revolution.

By the late 1950s, the CPC's attitudes toward the Chaoxianzu had notably shifted. Mao's new policies increasingly adopted an assimilative tone. For one, he initiated Sinicization, the process aimed at integrating minority groups into Han Chinese culture and standards. This push towards assimilation intensified during Mao's Great Leap Forward project, a campaign that incited widespread collectivism. As stated in June Dreyer's book China's Forty Million, among the first comprehensive studies of China's minority policy published in 1976, the "drive for unity" was not something new to this period. However, while the previous policy was formed around a "concept of unity within diversity, allowing a degree of ethnic and cultural plurality," Mao's new policies aimed at achieving "unity through uniformity." Dreyer emphasizes how the goals of uniformity and collectivism grew rampant, leading to the rise of assimilative efforts toward minorities.

To align with the CPC's federally mandated goals for drastically increased industrial steel production during the Great Leap Forward, YKAP was subjected to intensified pressure toward demographic assimilation. They were pulled into agricultural collectivization projects, despite previously being exempt as a recognized minority prefecture. In November of 1958, the CPC added Dunhua as the sixth county of the YKAP, substantially increasing Han Chinese presence in the province. Moreover, the number of Han Chinese communes constructed within the border of Yanbian surged. Under the collectivist policies of the CPC, the first People's Commune in Yanbian was built in Yanji in 1958, merging the eight former collective farms into a single entity. As the Chaoxianzu were forced to abandon their traditional farming practices and work in agricultural communes under Han Chinese oversight and quotas, unprecedented and forceful contact between the Han Chinese and the Chaoxianzu became common. During this period, the CPC began to abandon the earlier promises of autonomy and freedom. Instead, they reverted to the assimilative policies they once fiercely opposed when they sought Chaoxianzu support to oppose the KMT.

Additionally, the growingly integrationist policies towards the Chaoxianzu started manifesting through subtle changes. In 1957, the Rectification Movement and the radical leftist swing in Chinese politics placed increasing emphasis on political centralization and national unity. Thus, even cultural policies became increasingly assimilative. As reported in The Treatment of Minorities by Henry G. Schwarz, Mandarin—which had been previously taught only in higher grades or completely absent in the curricula of most minority schools—now became introduced in the lower grades. The Mandarin language learning hours increased disproportionately and gradually exceeded the Korean ones. Furthermore, "native forms" and "native settings" that were previously permitted in minority literature disappeared, and the content became "virtually indistinguishable" from Han publications. Korean language and culture–elements that the Chaoxianzu fiercely defended—faced heavy threats of erasure. This shift marked the onset of a more overtly oppressive atmosphere, characterized by openly assimilative minority policies. This was a trend that would intensify during the Cultural Revolution.

The treatment of the Chaoxianzu deteriorated following the failure of Mao's Great Leap Forward. This decline worsened during the subsequent three-year famine that devastated the population, as well as after the 1959 fallout with the Soviet Union. Such demonstrations of flaws in Mao's regime triggered a radicalization in policy.

The Revolution Begins

When Mao Ze Dong ascended to power, it became clear that he was a man of many contradictions, which continue to be studied and debated by historians to this day. Mao's policies toward China's minorities are indeed tainted with irony. His treatment of the Chaoxianzu community, in particular, is a looking glass that magnifies such contradictions. Mao's quote from the introduction reflects the new Communist government's recognition of the Chaoxianzu as "revolutionary martyrs" who bled for China's revolution. Similar to Mao's famous statement that "women held up half the sky," minority participation was also essential to the CPC's rise to and retention of power. Hence, Mao's vision held lofty promises of ethnic equality and autonomy for the minorities in Communist China.

However, as Mao's revolutionary authority began to wane, his minority policies began to rapidly radicalize. In the summer of 1966, Chairman Mao made a dramatic attempt to reconsolidate his power within his party and regain influence among the people. He launched the Great Proletar-

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ian Cultural Revolution (Wuchanjieji Wenhua Dageming). Mao mobilized young students to form Red Guard organizations that fiercely defended and enforced his ideologies. He began to encourage the use of violence and brutality to combat capitalist ideas and the "Four Olds": old culture, old customs, old morality, and old thoughts. This would manifest in his new minority policies and impact the Chaoxianzu in unprecedented ways. Through his radical campaigns during the Cultural Revolution, Mao was able to reclaim his authority and garner a cult of personality surrounding his movements and ideologies. He redeemed a nearly god-like status as a revolutionary leader. This would be best exemplified through the famous story of a prominent symbol that arose during this time: Mao's Golden Mangoes.

On August 5th, 1968, Mao Ze Dong gifted mangoes he received from the Pakistani foreign minister to the Worker's Propaganda team and other proletariat workers occupying the Qinghua University Campus. They had helped to settle the escalating conflicts and factionalism within Mao's Red Army. Mao's gift of mangoes sparked unanticipated levels of excitement and idolization among the workers who received the fruit. Alfreda Murck, a research fellow at the Beijing Palace Museum, described the reaction to the gift as a "transformation of the mangoes from fruit to near-divine symbol." As expressed in William Hinton's interviews of eyewitnesses, workers were noted to have stayed up all night to admire the mangoes and praise Mao's generosity. Even China's leading newspaper, the People's Daily published emotional poems regarding the fruits:

Seeing that golden mango/Was as if seeing the great leader Chairman Mao! Standing before that golden mango/ Was just like standing beside Chairman Mao; Again and again touching that golden mango; the golden mango was so warm! Again and again, sniffing the mango; that golden mango was so fragrant!...

The almost comical fixation and worship of the mangoes exemplify the impassioned following Mao regained through the Cultural Revolution. However, the friendly relationship between the Chaoxianzu and the CPC notably soured during this period of radical socialism in China.

Open Political Oppression

Professor "Z", a Chaoxianzu Professor at Yanbian University who lived through the Cultural Revolution, revealed in an interview:

They even prevented people from listening to the radio … even listening to South Korean broadcasts was a huge problem since South Korea was capitalist and considered an enemy. If you got caught listening to South Korean broadcasts, you'd face grave consequences—potentially even be sent to prison.

Professor Z's account reveals the extreme censorship and ideological control the Chaoxianzu people faced during the Cultural Revolution. Rooted in fear that foreign influences and the minority's loyalty to their homeland would affect the unity of China, Mao began to censor and surveil the community. Not only did this policy restrict the Chaoxianzu from keeping ties with their roots, but their ethnic identity became a target for political repression.

The Chaoxianzu's model minority image became a facade to cover up the more sinister history of the Cultural Revolution for the Chaoxianzu. As echoed by Professor "Z"'s sentiment, the Chaoxianzu, who were once considered as friends and allies by the CPC, were no more—they were now outsiders and enemies. Despite the previous contributions of the Chaoxianzu community and the formal legal recognition of Yanbian's autonomous status in 1954, the safety and cultural freedom of the Chaoxianzu were fleeting. While the Chaoxianzu had been given limited autonomy and rights when they complied with the CPC, the tolerance was not only highly conditional but also temporary.

Mao sought to consolidate and maintain his renewed authority by centralizing power and unifying the Chinese population. This agenda created the need for active assimilation. Consequently, Mao began to portray minority groups in China, such as the Chaoxianzu, as hindrances toward his communist agenda. Mao leveraged ethnic and cultural differences to reinforce his authority, framing the distinct identities of minority communities as diversions from broader national goals. By the end of 1966, Mao Yuanxin, Chairman Mao's nephew, arrived in the Yanbian region. He admonished Chu Tokhae, the celebrated Chaoxianzu political leader and first chairman of the Chaoxianzu autonomous government, for not vigorously imposing the Cultural Revolution. Chu was branded as "king-to-be of an independent Korean kingdom on Chinese soil" and charged with "counter-revolutionary activities" due to his promotion of "Korean ethnic culture." Moreover, Mao Yuanxin incited a strong sense of Han Chinese nationalism that induced a further purge of Chaoxianzu communists within the local government. Maoist ideology combined ethnic identity with political reliability, leading to the erasure of minority representation in the local government.

The Korean language became labeled as a part of the "Four Olds" that the Cultural Revolution targeted. Consequently, Korean texts and literature were subject to being burned. Chaoxianzu elites were accused by Maoist extremists of spying for Korea, creating the ban of Korean language use and public displays of traditional Korean culture. Consequently, the publication of ethnic language books, newspapers, and magazines was restricted or halted. The Korean identity became fuether endangered when the

Han workers argued that the language barrier disrupted communication in communes and that learning Chinese would increase the "socialist and communist ideas" of the ethnic Koreans. Consequently, ethnic educational institutions were closed, ethnic schools were disbanded, and ethnic written language was excluded from schools with large concentrations of Chaoxianzu students. Teachers who advocated for maintaining the Korean language in Chaoxianzu schools faced wage cuts, expulsion, and strict government surveillance. While the Chaoxianzu tried to stay loyal to their culture, legal barriers forced them to sacrifice cultural preservation for political compliance.

The day-to-day lives of the Chaoxianzu became influenced by the suppression and censorship of traditional culture. In "Forbidden Homeland," June Hee Kwon describes the period from the late 1950s to the late 1970s as "culturally sterile and politically brutal" for the Chaoxianzu. The Chaoxianzu Music Organization was disbanded, the Yanbian Song and Dance Troupe was banned from performing ethnic music, and even the Yanbian Arts School was closed by 1969. Instead, "quotation songs," which are "propaganda songs pierced together from quotations from talks given by Mao Zedong and [vice premier] Lin Biao," were encouraged for Chaoxianzu artists to play. The community was stripped of the artistic and cultural freedoms afforded to them during early CPC rule. As minority support became less necessary and the CPC agenda shifted to unification and Sinicization, traditional Chaoxianzu culture faced censorship, and their art became used as a vehicle for political indoctrination and propaganda. Even Chaoxianzu siminyo (new folk songs) that contained "themes of love, despair, separation, and personal desire" were considered counterrevolutionary.

Since the beginning of Mao's Cultural Revolution, the political persecution of the Chaoxianzu intensified. The Chaoxianzu became scapegoated as "disloyal ethnic separatists" and "hostile opponents of communism," using these accusations as excuses to strip the Chaoxianzu of their cultural practices and political autonomy. In particular, the educated Chaoxianzu were accused of inciting local nationalism. Their efforts to preserve the Korean language and education, which had been previously applauded, were now viewed as an obstacle to the CPC's socialist agenda. Korean intellectuals became political targets, labeled as "revisionists" and "right-wing capitalists." Prosecution of faculty and scholars of Yanbian University, the most notable university in the Yanbian region, became increasingly common throughout the Cultural Revolution. Since 1966, there was a subsequent cut of 23.7% of Yanbian University's staff since 1966. As much as the Chaoxianzu tried to protect their identity, political pressures inevitably dismantled their cultural and educational institutions.

Moreover, the life story of Kim Chol, one of the most famous Chaoxianzu poets in China, embodies an enticing narrative common to the Chaoxianzu. Lee documented:

In 1950, at the age of 18, [Kim Chol] …joined the Chinese People's Volunteers ... Inspired by his war experience, he composed two volumes of Korean Poetry. He also wrote and directed a play entitled "The Dance of Army Engineers," which received the highest award at a national contest sponsored by the People's Liberation Army. When this play was shown at Beijing during the Korean War, he [even] had an opportunity to meet with Chairman Mao Zedong.

Kim was able to receive recognition despite his status as a migrant. However, his story took a twist not long after. Following the war, Kim returned to Yanbian as a journalist for the Northeast Korean People's Daily. Yet with the start of the Cultural Revolution, he was denounced as a "revisionist," a "reactionary authority," and an "anti-party and anti-socialist element." As the political tides shifted, Chol - a man once celebrated by the CPC for his contributions - was swiftly marginalized due to his identity as a Chaoxianzu minority.

Furthermore, the escalating tensions between the Chaoxianzu and the Han Chinese led to a devastating rise in ethnic violence. Any individual who resisted oppression in the slightest was at risk of false, exaggerated accusations. Being Chaoxianzu or speaking Korean in the wrong place at the wrong time was enough to be incriminated. Notably, 2,653 Chaoxianzu died from violent persecution, suffering, or suicide to escape persecution. To quote Julia Lovell, a notable professor of Modern Chinese History, "[E]vents took a horrific turn in the frontier town of Yanbian, where freight trains trundled from China into the DPRK, draped with the corpses of Koreans killed in the pitched battles of the Cultural Revolution, and daubed with threatening graffiti: 'This will be your fate also, you tiny revisionists'!" This terrifying recounting by Lowell reflects the horrors inflicted by the CPC authority against the Chaoxianzu minority. The CPC wielded political ideology as a weapon to eliminate perceived threats, using ethnic identity as a convenient excuse.

However, the Chaoxianzu's covert efforts to maintain their distinct identity persisted. According to "The Psychology of Diaspora Experiences," published by the American Psychological Association, the Chaoxianzu resisted assimilation through "a strong sense of ethnic solidarity and attachment to Korean culture." For example, copies of the first major publication of Korean folk songs in China (the Chosŏnjok Min'gan Munye Charyojip) were able to survive even the worst years of the Cultural Revolution. Moreover, Yanbian University survived and continued

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throughout the Cultural Revolution despite the CPC officers' strict supervision and denunciation of the Korean language and literature. Following the end of the Cultural Revolution, the University reclaimed many of its distinct Korean characteristics.

Retired Yanbian University Professor "T" revealed that many Chaoxianzu continued to speak in Korean to their children and in private conversations, keeping ties to their roots alive. While the Chaoxianzu never resorted to open or violent rebellion, they waged a quiet yet powerful resistance by preserving linguistic and cultural traditions in both institutions and daily life. They defied full assimilation and ensured that their heritage endured.

Threats of assimilation for the Chaoxianzu minority are not an isolated occurrence. As Adam Cathcart, Associate Professor of East Asian History, explains, "[the CPC] continues to deepen and accelerate its assimilationist drive toward ethnic minority groups along its securitized peripheries." This trend has been particularly evident in recent years. Under current CPC Chairman Xi Jinping, efforts at cultural assimilation intensified. In January 2021, the Legislative Affairs Commission ruled that Korean language instruction in Yanbian violated the Constitution. Hence, Mandarin replaced Korean as the dominant language for billboards and road signs, making a departure from decades-long tradition since the region's recognition as an autonomous prefecture. Additionally, Korean books are once again facing regulation and removal from minority schools. Near the end of the interview, Professor "T" regretfully revealed that "After [next year], [Chaoxianzu students] will have to all take exams in Chinese" and follow a Chinese-centric curriculum.

Conclusion

It is not the most intellectual of species that survives; it is not the strongest that survives; but the species that survives is the one that is able best to adapt and adjust to the changing environment in which it finds itself.

Eric H. Cline After 1177 BC: The Survival of Civilizations.

Although initial waves of Korean immigrants were partially assimilated into the dominant Han Chinese society, the Chaoxianzu community formed a solid foundation by the late 19th century. The Chaoxianzu community even obtained privileges, including legal recognition from the Chinese government and respect from mainstream Chinese society as a "model minority." Along the way, they demonstrated impressive resilience in maintaining their distinct Korean culture and identity. Particularly, throughout the Cultural Revolution that started in 1966, the Chaoxianzu endured Mao Zedong's increasingly assimilative and oppressive minority policies.

Despite the challenges and persecutions they faced, the Chaoxianzu survived through compromise and maintained aspects of their culture in a largely oppressive environment. From their collective adaptation emerged powerful stories of resilience and hope that echo today. There is no indication that the Chaoxianzu were more intelligent or strong than their counterparts. Yet their outstanding determination to adapt and adjust to China's changing political environment earned them respect and rights from the CPC. Even when the tides turned against them, they endured new challenges and preserved their identity through covert practice.

Professor "T" confessed, "I speak in Korean. I try to speak in Korean. Yet even when I hear Korean on the street, I think to myself: how long will that Korean language last?" Professor "T" is a powerful example of the Chaoxianzu community and represents how Chaoxianzu individuals consciously try to retain ties to their distinct Korean identity even today. His participation in this interview, despite the current political climate in Yanbian, is a testament to his bravery and dedication to preserving Chaoxianzu culture and history. Significantly, even in the face of assimilation today, there is no guarantee that what the CPC is doing in 2025 will be more successful than in the late 20th century. Similarly, the resilience and strength of our communities to withstand adversity highlights an enduring truth: culture survives through memory, practice, and celebration - even when external factors try to erase them. After all, our roots shape us, and the communities we build.

Endnotes

[1] Peace Bakwon Lee, A Performance Analysis of Chaoxianzu Oral Traditions in Yanbian China (The Ohio State University, 2002), 10.

[2] A model minority is a minority considered highly successful in aspects such as education, income, and social status. See Dru C Gladney, Making Majorities (Stanford University Press, 1998), 259-279.

[3] Ma Bing, "The Great Spirit of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea Mabing《伟大的抗美援朝精神》" Daqing Public Security Bureau: Economic Crime Investigation Brigade, https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_13238047 (accessed September 3, 2024).

[4] Although commonly referred to as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) by many western sources, the official name of the Communist party founded by Mao Ze Dong is the Communist Party of China (CPC).

[5] Donggil Kim, "The Chinese Civil War and the Ethno-Genesis of the Korean Minority in Northeast China," The

Chinese Historical Review 21, no. 2 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1179/1547402x14z.00000000035.
[6] National Ethnic Affairs Commission of the People's Republic of China, "历史沿革," www.neac.gov.cn, https://www.neac.gov.cn/seac/ztzl/cxz/lsyg.shtml (accessed September 25, 2024).
[7] Palanquin was the conveyance used in East Asia that was carried on the shoulders of men.
[8] National Ethnic Affairs Commission of the People's Republic of China.
[9] Fang Gao, "What It Means to Be a 'Model Minority': Voices of Ethnic Koreans in Northeast China," Asian Ethnicity 9, no. 1 (2008), https://doi.org/10.1080/14631360701803252.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Han Shik Park, "Political Culture and Ideology of the Korean Minority in China," Korean Studies 11, no. 1 (1987): 13–32, https://doi.org/10.1353/ks.1987.0003.
[12] Lee, A Performance Analysis of Chaoxianzu Oral Traditions in Yanbian China, 10.
[13] Odd Arne Westad, Empire and Righteous Nation (Harvard University Press, 2021).
[14] Andrew David Jackson, Key Papers on Korea: Essays Celebrating 25 Years of the Centre of Korean Studies (Global Oriental, 2013), 83.
[15] Fang Gao, "Language and Power: Korean–Chinese Students' Language Attitude and Practice," Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development 30, no. 6 (2009), https://doi.org/10.1080/01434630903147922.
[16] Koo, Sound of the Border, 27.
[17] Henry G. Schwarz, "The Treatment of Minorities," Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science 31, no. 1 (1973): 193–207, https://doi.org/10.2307/1173494.
[18] Chae-jin Lee, China's Korean Minority (Routledge, 2021), 57.
[19] Professor "X" (Retired Chaoxianzu history professor at Yanbian University who would like to remain anonymous) in discussion with the author, August 2024.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Adam Cathcart, "From Liberation to the Great Leap Forward: Ethnic Koreans and Assimilation in Northeast," in Transnational East Asian Studies, edited by Kevin Cawley and Julia Schneider. (Liverpool University Press, 2023), 255-269.
[22] Dong Jo Shin, Sinicization with Socialist Characteristics: Chinese Communism and Ethnicity in Yanbian 1921-1976 (Washington State University, 2018), 14.
[23] Professor "T".
[24] Ibid.
[25] June Dreyer, "China's Minority Nationalities in the Cultural Revolution," The China Quarterly 35 (1968): 96–109, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0305741000032124.
[26] Shin, Sinicization with Socialist Characteristics, 104.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid, 208.
[29] Chae-jin Lee, China's Korean Minority, 66.
[30] Ibid.
[31] June Hee Kwon, "Forbidden Homeland: Divided Belonging on the China-Korea Border," Critique of Anthropology 39, no. 1 (2018): 74–94, https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275x18790799.
[32] Park Woo et al., "China's Ethnic Minority and Neoliberal Developmental Citizenship: Yanbian Koreans in Perspective," Citizenship Studies 24, no. 7 (August 30, 2020): 918–33, https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2020.1812957.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Woo et. al, "China's Ethnic Minority and Neoliberal Developmental Citizenship."
[35] Ibid.
[36] Amanda Conklin, Makings of a Modern "Model Minority": Ethnic Koreans in Northeast China (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 2012), 7.
[37] Fang Gao, "What It Means to Be a 'Model Minority': Voices of Ethnic Koreans in Northeast China."
[38] Lee, China's Korean Minority, 27.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Conklin, Makings of a Modern "Model Minority", 6.
[41] Lee, China's Korean Minority, 30.
[42] Kwon, "Forbidden Homeland: Divided Belonging on the China-Korea Border."
[43] Shin, Sinicization with Socialist Characteristics, 8.
[44] Roderick Macfarquhar et al., The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao from the Hundred Flowers to the Great Leap Forward (Harvard University Asia Center, 1989), 6.
[45] Dreyer, "China's Minority Nationalities in the Cultural Revolution."
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid, 36.
[48] Sue Williams, China: A Century of Revolution - The Mao Years 1949–1976. Public Broadcasting Company, 1994.
[49] Dreyer, "China's Minority Nationalities in the Cultural Revolution."
[50] June Dreyer, China's Forty Millions (Harvard University Press, 1976), 160.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Cathcart, "From Liberation to the Great Leap Forward."
[53] Ibid.
[54] Shin, Sinicization with Socialist Characteristics, 107.
[55] Schwarz, "The Treatment of Minorities."
[56] Adam Cathcart, "From Liberation to the Great Leap Forward."
[57] Ibid.
[58] A. Y. Chau, "Mao's Travelling Mangoes: Food as Relic in Revolutionary China," Past & Present 206, no. Supplement 5 (2010): 256–75, https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtq020.
[59] Neil Redfern, "Women Hold up Half the Sky: The Response of Maoists in Britain to the Challenge of Feminism," Journal

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of Labor and Society 22, no. 2 (2019): 243–57, https://doi.org/10.1111/wusa.12428.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Alfreda Murck, "Golden Mangoes—the Life Cycle of a Cultural Revolution Symbol," Archives of Asian Art 57, no. 1 (2007): 1–21, https://doi.org/10.1484/aaa.2007.0000.
[62] Ibid.
[63] William Hinton, Hundred Day War (Monthly Review Press, 1972), 227.
[64] Murck, "Golden Mangoes—the Life Cycle of a Cultural Revolution Symbol."
[65] Professor "Z" (Chaoxianzu Sports professor at Yanbian University who would like to remain anonymous) in discussion with the author, August 2024.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Peng Hai, "Imposing Nationalism on Diaspora Peoples: Korean Chinese in the Master Narrative of Chinese Nationalism," Global Societies Journal 4, no. 0 (2016), https://escholarship.org/uc/item/78m2035b.
[68] Woo et. al, "China's Ethnic Minority and Neoliberal Developmental Citizenship."
[69] Dai Qingxia and Dong Yanet al., "The Historical Evolution of Bilingual Education for China's Ethnic Minorities," Chinese Education & Society 34, no. 2 (2001): 7–53, https://doi.org/10.2753/ced1061-193234027.
[70] Woo et al., "China's Ethnic Minority and Neoliberal Developmental Citizenship."
[71] Pyong Gap Min, "A Comparison of the Korean Minorities in China and Japan," International Migration Review 26, no. 1 (1992): 4, https://doi.org/10.2307/2546934.
[72] Shin, Sinicization with Socialist Characteristic.
[73] Dai and Dong, "The Historical Evolution of Bilingual Education for China's Ethnic Minorities."
[74] Shin, Sinicization with Socialist Characteristics, 111.
[75] Kwon, "Forbidden Homeland."
[76] Koo, Sound of the Border, 58.
[77] Ibid, 59.
[78] Ibid, 38.
[79] Shin, Sinicization with Socialist Characteristics, 2.
[80] Dai and Dong, "The Historical Evolution of Bilingual Education for China's Ethnic Minorities."
[81] Ibid.
[82] Lee, China's Korean Minority, 63.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Sungji Kwak, Josonjok, Who Are They? (Koyangsi, 2013), 256-257.
[85] Julia Lovell, Maoism: A Global History (Alfred A. Knopf, 2019), 136.
[86] Richard M. Lee et al., "The Psychology of Diaspora Experiences: Intergroup Contact, Perceived Discrimination, and the Ethnic Identity of Koreans in China.," Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology 13, no. 2 (2007): 115–24, https://doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.13.2.115.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Professor "T".
[89] Cathcart, "From Liberation to the Great Leap Forward."
[90] Ibid.
[91] Professor "T".
[92] Ibid.
[93] Eric H Cline, After 1177 B. C. (Turning Points in Ancient Hist, 2024), 194.
[94] Professor "T".

Selected Annotated Bibliography

Bing, Ma. The Great Spirit of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea《伟大的抗美援朝精神》. Daqing Public Security Bureau: Economic Crime Investigation Brigade, n.d.

Cathcart, Adam. "From Liberation to the Great Leap Forward: Ethnic Koreans and Assimilation in Northeast." In Transnational East Asian Studies, edited by Kevin Cawley and Julia Schneider, 255-269. Liverpool University Press, 2023.

Cathcart links Chaoxianzu's history during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) to present-day events. From his journal, I was able to reaffirm a narrative that was echoed throughout my personal interviews: assimilative forces were not an isolated incident, and there has been a recent resurgence in Yanbian.

Chau, A. Y. "Mao's Travelling Mangoes: Food as Relic in Revolutionary China." Past & Present 206, no. 5 (2010): 256–75. https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtq020.

Cline, Eric H. After 1177 B. C. Turning Points in Ancient History, 2024.

Conklin, Amanda. Makings of a Modern "Model Minority": Ethnic Koreans in Northeast China. University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 2012.

Dreyer, June. "China's Minority Nationalities in the Cultural Revolution."The China Quarterly 35 (1968): 96–109. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0305741000032124.

Dreyer, June. China's Forty Millions. Harvard University Press, 1976.

Dreyer was one of the first Western scholars to study China's minority policies. Although the focal point was not specifically the Chaoxianzu minority, reading this book allowed me to develop a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the motivations and impacts of CPC's minority policies. The book traces back to the Imperial Era (until 1911) and the Republic Era (1912-1941) of China and tracks how minority policy evolved.

Fang, Gao. "Language and Power: Korean–Chinese Students' Language Attitude and Practice." Journal of Multi-

lingual and Multicultural Development 30, no. 6 (2009): 525–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434630903147922.
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Koo, Sunhee. Sound of the Border: Music and Identity of Korean Minority in China. University of Hawaii Press, 2021.
Koo masterfully weaves together the Chaoxianzu history and the evolution of their music. Throughout Mao's rule, the political climate underwent drastic changes and the Chaoxianzu faced escalating threats of cultural erasure. Yet the Chaoxianzu maintained the presence of Korean culture in their daily lives through Korean songs.
Kwak, Sungji. Josonjok, Who Are They? Koyangsi, 2013.
Kwon, June Hee. "Forbidden Homeland: Divided Belonging on the China-Korea Border." Critique of Anthropology 39, no. 1 (2018): 74–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275x18790799.
Kwon captures the complex relationship between the Chaoxianzu and the CPC, offering a nuanced perspective on their history. Early CPC's policies of freedom and autonomy changed and took on assimilative characteristics with the onset of the Cultural Revolution. Kwon enriches the narrative through enticing metaphors that deepen the reader's understanding of the changing relationship.
Lee, Chae-jin. China's Korean Minority. Routledge, 2021.
Lee uses an abundance of interesting vignettes and primary sources - a few of which I cited in my paper. Lee explores the gap between the promises of the CPC and the reality of their treatment of the Chaoxianzu minority and reveals the thought process of the Chaoxianzu behind supporting the CPC.
Lee, Min-Dong. Contending for National Identity: A Close Examination of China's Ethnic Relations with Chaoxianzu Minority as a Test Case. University of Toronto, 2000.
Lee, Peace Bakwon. A Performance Analysis of Chaoxianzu Oral Traditions in Yanbian China. The Ohio State University, 2002.
Lee's analysis uncovers a forgotten chapter of Chaoxianzu history by incorporating firsthand oral sources. By recovering these accounts, Lee reconstructs their migration history and details of their lifestyle, filling gaps in historiography.
Lee, Richard M., et al. "The Psychology of Diaspora Experiences: Intergroup Contact, Perceived Discrimination, and the Ethnic Identity of Koreans in China." Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology 13, no. 2 (2007): 115–24. https://doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.13.2.115.
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Zedong Mao and Biao Lin, Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung. Worcestershire, United Kingdom: Read Books Ltd, 2013.
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Professor "T" (Chaoxianzu History professor at Yanbian University) in discussion with the author, August 2024.
Conducting first-hand interviews on Mao's minority politics is challenging, particularly in Yanbian, where the topic remains sensitive under Xijin Ping's rule. Fortunately, through family friends, I was able to privately interview three professors from Yanbian University. Their first-hand accounts offered invaluable insights into Chaoxianzu history and exposed raw experiences from the Cultural Revolution. Understandably, given the history of the region,

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all three professors requested anonymity.
Professor “X” (Retired Chaoxianzu History professor at Yanbian University) in discussion with the author, August 2024.
Professor “Z” (Chaoxianzu Sports professor at Yanbian University) in discussion with the author, August 2024.
Min, Pyong Gap. “A Comparison of the Korean Minorities in China and Japan.” International Migration Review 26, no. 1 (1992). https://doi.org/10.2307/2546934.
Qingxia, Dai, and Dong Yan. “The Historical Evolution of Bilingual Education for China’s Ethnic Minorities.” Chinese Education & Society 34, no. 2 (2001): 7–53. https://doi.org/10.2753/ced1061-193234027.
Redfern, Neil. “Women Hold up Half the Sky: The Response of Maoists in Britain to the Challenge of Feminism.” Journal of Labor and Society 22, no. 2 (2019): 243–57. https://doi.org/10.1111/wusa.12428.
Schwarz, Henry G. “The Treatment of Minorities.” Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science 31, no. 1 (1973): 193–207. https://doi.org/10.2307/1173494.
Shin, Dong Jo. Sinicization with Socialist Characteristics: Chinese Communism and Ethnicity in Yanbian 1921-1976. Washington State University, 2018.
Shin responded to my email, offering encouragement for my paper. Moreover, his extensive bibliography of English, Chinese, and Korean sources truly enriched my understanding of the topic. This was one of my most used sources due to its incorporation of diverse perspectives. In his writing, Shin argues that under Maoism, assimilation was the inevitable ultimate, framing the CPC’s policies toward the Chaoxianzu as a "civilizing mission" aimed at achieving a communist utopia. While my paper does not fully align with his perspective, his work proved invaluable.
Westad, Odd Arne. Empire and Righteous Nation. Harvard University Press, 2021.
Williams, Sue. China: A Century of Revolution - The Mao Years 1949–1976. Public Broadcasting Company, 1994.
Sue Williams’s documentary episode on Mao’s China allowed me to learn the perspectives of the CPC and party members. Through a plethora of interviews with both government officials and citizens, I better understood the varying influences of Mao’s policies and the Cultural Revolution. In particular, I was able to understand the impact of the Hundred Flowers Campaign on common people.
Woo, Park, Robert Easthope, and Chang Kyung-Sup. “China’s Ethnic Minority and Neoliberal Developmental Citizenship: Yanbian Koreans in Perspective.” Citizenship Studies 24, no. 7 (2020): 918–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2020.1812957.