



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *Sino-NK in the Border Region: Executive Summary*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/80397/>

Version: Publishers draft (with formatting)

Monograph:

Cathcart, AJ, Denney, S and Green, C (2014) *Sino-NK in the Border Region: Executive Summary*. Research Report. Sino-NK

Reuse

Unless indicated otherwise, fulltext items are protected by copyright with all rights reserved. The copyright exception in section 29 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 allows the making of a single copy solely for the purpose of non-commercial research or private study within the limits of fair dealing. The publisher or other rights-holder may allow further reproduction and re-use of this version - refer to the White Rose Research Online record for this item. Where records identify the publisher as the copyright holder, users can verify any specific terms of use on the publisher's website.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

Sino-NK in the Border Region Executive Summary

April 3 – April 23, 2014

by Adam Cathcart, Christopher Green, and Steven Denney

Funded by [a grant from the Academy of Korean Studies \(AKS\)](#), three core members of the Sino-NK team followed the path taken by Kim Jong-il during a trip to Northeast China in 2010. During this Manchurian venture through Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang provinces, we interacted with contemporary and historical places, artifacts, and people; we benchmarked our understanding of the wider region; and we arrived at a more holistic appraisal of Sino-North Korean relations than is otherwise possible when located outside the region. Below is an executive summary of our findings, categorized by location. For those interested in reading (and seeing) more, a special issue of [The Tumen Triangle Documentation Project](#) will be published at SinoNK.com soon, using data acquired during our fieldwork.

Shenyang

- The DPRK's flagship hotel in the region, the Qibaoshan (Chilbosan; 칠보산), has been substantially renovated and improved in the past two years; it had few North Korean guests, probably due to the fact that few North Koreans travel in April because of domestic political considerations.
- Chinese national media (as well as local youth organizations) paid close attention to the repatriation Chinese People's Volunteers' remains from Korean War battlefields in the ROK to a cemetery in Shenyang, the area around which is currently being beautified.

Ji'an & Tonghua

- Ji'an and Tonghua remain peripheral; transportation to this sub-region of southwest Jilin province is still well off of the high-speed trunks. Buildings visible across the river in Manpo, DPRK show signs of recent improvement, as verified by local sources.
- Two days after our departure, a new cross-border Ji'an-Manpo tourist route was announced; this venture involves an extremely limited number of participants (presently about 30 Chinese tourists per week), but bears watching.
- The PRC has completed and opened the new Goguryo Relics Exhibition Center in Ji'an; security is rather tight and no photos are allowed, indicating the sensitivity of the new steele now on display as the centrepiece of the museum.
- The DPRK restaurant in Ji'an has moved into a new and larger building staffed by young women from Kanggye, making it potentially unique as a facility where the staff is not from Pyongyang families.



Harbin

- The new Ahn Jung-geun Memorial Hall in Harbin's mainline train station is open to the public, physically symbolizing fissures in the region and historical disputes.
- Guests are expected to provide passport details upon entering the memorial hall, but photographs are allowed. Japanese guests are clearly not encouraged; captions are in Korean and Chinese.
- A flower basket from the ROK Embassy in Beijing was placed near Ahn's bust. KCNA made note of the exhibition with approval.

Jilin City

- Somewhere between 400-500 North Korean participants from around the region attended the April 15 gathering of overseas workers, Party members, and business people at Kim Il-sung's alma mater Jilin Yuwen Middle School in commemoration of the leader's birth. Volleyball and other sporting events were held in the city on the same day.
- Though most attendees were young and came alone, there were also a significant number of entire families present. North Korea is said to demand that some members of families of overseas workers remain in-country to insure against escape, but it is evidently possible to circumvent this.
- Chinese security at the event was substantial although no major Chinese officials appeared to attend.
- Ownership of consumer electronics connoted substantive affluence amongst most attendees.

Tumen

- A high-speed railway line is being constructed through Tumen, grazing the North Korean border en route to Hunchun; the city is developing rapidly.
- Namyang has shown few visible signs of change, and the scene suggests that economic interactions remain quite limited, with coal being the primary commodity traded.
- Security near the border post is still fairly strong, with the Chinese side deploying large German shepherd units.
- The Tumen-Qilbosan train/tourist route will be reopening this coming April 30. The train to Qilbosan will run through Hoeryong, Chongjin, and one other city before arriving at the mountain. The trains entering North Korea will be 5 cars in length (two hard sleepers, one soft sleeper, one dining car, and one car for "luggage"). In May and June, there will be one train per week, leaving each Friday, and this expands to two trains per week in July.

Yanji

- Massive construction moves forward, and a central government-funded new city is rising rapidly to the west of the downtown core.
- Tourist operators (as well as academics) expressed frustration at the state of bilateral tourism, although there is still the ability to do a driving tour to Rason for 2 days.



Yanji, cont.

- North Korean involvement in the Luoqing Hotel has ended; what was once a Sino-DPRK joint venture is now entirely run by the Chinese. North Korean interests own a new hotel elsewhere in the city. A new restaurant has also been opened along the banks of river, where (as in Ji'an), many of the waitresses own digital cameras or tablet computers.
- Samjiyeon and Achim tablet computers can no longer be exported from the DPRK. Anecdotal evidence suggests the authorities may have been uncomfortable with recent sales of the machines on Ebay, but more likely is anger from a Chinese JV partner that produces a similar machine for the Chinese market.
- Conversations at Yanbian University indicated that business ties between ROK and PRC firms continue to expand, and the region is better prepared than ever to receive investment. However, the lack of economic and political reform in North Korea is an obvious factor in keeping transportation costs (and travel times) high.
- Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture has completed a very large, new history museum, containing no mention whatsoever of the DPRK (or the controversial proto-Korean state, the Koguryo) and a few slight nods to business ties with South Korea. The goal and thrust of the museum is clearly to bind the *Chosunjok* into the national Han-centered narrative, rather than presenting a balanced picture of regional interactions.
- None of the individuals we spoke with expressed fears over a fourth North Korean nuclear test; however, there was considerable frustration voiced at North Korea "doing politics not economics." Consumers and businesspeople believe that peace and relative economic prosperity in neighboring northeastern North Korea are necessary conditions for sustained economic growth on par with other regions of the country.
- The purge of Jang Song-taek clearly put a dent in bilateral economic ties and cross-border relationships, but the North Korean business network in Manchuria is still running at high speed, especially relative to the DPRK domestic economy.

For inquiries, contact Editor-in-Chief Dr. Adam Cathcart (AdamCathcart@gmail.com); Co-Editor Christopher Green (ChristopherKGreen@gmail.com); or Managing Editor Steven Denney (StevenCDenney@gmail.com).