

Hun Chun, an international cross-border economic region

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Hun Chun is situated in the borderlands of China, North Korea, and Russia. This fortuitous geographic location has allowed the region to become an international logistics hub for Northeast Asia. The Tumen River Development Program, proposed by Jilin Province in 1990, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) that followed in 1991, laid down the building blocks for the region's development.¹ The end of the Cold War in East Asia led to improved international relations in the region, and brought about the possibility of multilateral, rather than bilateral, economic cooperation. Globalization has led to an increase in the frequency of cultural exchange. As a result of this, Hun Chun has become an extremely hybrid place in a short period of time.

The Border Economic Cooperation Zone in Hun Chun is a national border economic cooperation zone that was approved by the state council in September 1992, with a planned area of 21.77 square kilometers. In April 2000 and February 2001, the state council approved respectively the establishment of the Hun Chun Export Processing Zone and the Hun Chun Russia-China Trade Zone within the cooperation zone, implementing a 'three areas in one' management mode. In April 2012, the state council approved the establishment of China's Tumen River Region (Hun Chun) International Cooperation Model Zone, which ushered in the historical opportunity for leapfrog development.

The Hun Chun Export Processing Zone is one of the first 15 export processing zones in China, with a planned area of 2.44 square kilometers. With the continuous adjustment of national industrial policies and increasing requirements for the transformation and upgrading of export processing trade, export processing zones experienced rapid development. They feature a characteristic industrial pattern of woodwork processing and seafood processing, supplemented by cross-border e-commerce and bonded logistics. At present, the planned area has been adjusted to 1.038 square kilometers, and the area consists of 'seven connections and one leveling'. The Hun Chun China-Russia Trade Zone covers an area of 9.6 hectares. It was put into trial operation in December

2001, and officially put into operation in June 2005. It is the only border trade functional zone open to Russia in Jilin Province, meeting the need for the development of border trade.

At present, there are 808 registered enterprises in the Border Economic Cooperation Zone, including 41 foreign-funded enterprises from eight countries and regions including Japan, the Republic of Korea, Russia, the United States, Hong Kong. It has successively introduced a number of well-known enterprises both at home and abroad, and has come to develop a characteristic industrial system. In the Cooperation Zone, the non-ferrous metal industry is gradually maturing, while the aquaculture processing industry is rapidly

developing, and the textile and garment industry continues to grow. The development of new and high technology industries has accelerated and the tertiary industry has emerged.

These developments taking place in the Cooperation Zone have meant that Hun Chun has come to experience the full force of globalization. An increase in the cross-border flow of goods has been accompanied by the flow of information, capital, services, and people. The result of this has been the emergence of a fluidity and hybridity in the region. This is best observed in its cityscape, an example of which is the system of signage used in Hun Chun. Following the guidelines of the Hun Chun government, all of the signs in the city are in three languages: Chinese,

Korean, and Russian. The 'three language landscape' of Hun Chun demonstrates how the region's fluid and hybrid nature has brought about unique regional cultural characteristics.

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Notes

- 1 Matsuno, S. 2011. 'International Cross Border Economic Regions in East Asia, Greater Tumen Region (GTR) and Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS)', *Ritsumeikan International Affairs* 10:143-158.



The 'three language landscape' of Hun Chun. Photo by the author.



Naha Okinawa Japan Shuri-Castle. Photo by CEphoto, Uwe Aranas. Photo reproduced under a creative commons license courtesy Uwe Aranas on Wikipedia.

Shuri Castle was used to project the image of Ryukyu's past, as a place of coexistence and peace. This tied in with Okinawa's strong tradition of peace movements that had taken root around the US military base. Amidst the attempt to relocate Kadena air base to Henoko and the resistance that emerged, many peace activists in Okinawa further called for the removal of US bases to Guam. However, the geopolitical atmosphere of the region changed in 2010 with the sinking of the Cheonan warship in the West Sea of Korea, and calls for US military base transfers from Okinawa fell silent.

In the 30 years since its restoration, Shuri Castle stood as a beacon of peace in East Asia. Its presence acted as a reminder that these islands, which have played such a crucial role in US strategies in East Asia, were once a peaceful and prosperous place of trade. It is therefore hoped that Shuri Castle will be soon be restored so that it may once again project our aspirations for peace East Asia.

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