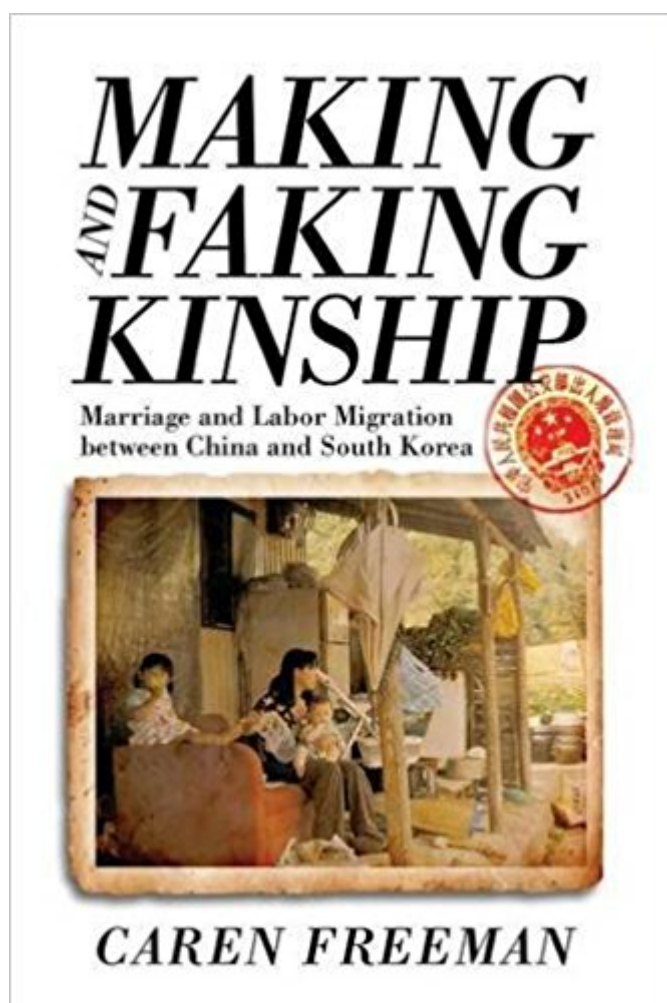


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# Making And Faking Kinship: Marriage And Labor Migration Between China And South Korea



## Synopsis

In the years leading up to and directly following rapprochement with China in 1992, the South Korean government looked to ethnic Korean (Chosŏn'jok) brides and laborers from northeastern China to restore productivity to its industries and countryside. South Korean officials and the media celebrated these overtures not only as a pragmatic solution to population problems but also as a patriotic project of reuniting ethnic Koreans after nearly fifty years of Cold War separation. As Caren Freeman's fieldwork in China and South Korea shows, the attempt to bridge the geopolitical divide in the name of Korean kinship proved more difficult than any of the parties involved could have imagined. Discriminatory treatment, artificially suppressed wages, clashing gender logics, and the criminalization of so-called runaway brides and undocumented workers tarnished the myth of ethnic homogeneity and exposed the contradictions at the heart of South Korea's transnational kin-making project. Unlike migrant brides who could acquire citizenship, migrant workers were denied the rights of long-term settlement, and stringent quotas restricted their entry. As a result, many Chosŏn'jok migrants arranged paper marriages and fabricated familial ties to South Korean citizens to bypass the state apparatus of border control. *Making and Faking Kinship* depicts acts of "counterfeit kinship," false documents, and the leaving behind of spouses and children as strategies implemented by disenfranchised people to gain mobility within the region's changing political economy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A 'Korean wind' swept northeastern China in the late 1990s as ethnic Korean female residents of that region left seeking to marry rural bachelors in South Korea. . . . This sensitive, revealing ethnographic study explores how matches hastily arranged during 'marriage tours' to China came under strain when the brides arrived in their new homes." — Andrew J. Nathan, *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2013) "Making and Faking Kinship makes a significant contribution to the anthropology of South Korea, as well as scholarship on transnational migration, legality and nationalism, and gender and kinship. I highly recommend it for undergraduate courses, as it complicates issues students might otherwise dismiss as being "natural" (such as kinship) or "immoral" (like undocumented migration or contract marriages), and it helps place larger issues, such as cross-border marriages, multiculturalism, globalization, and nationalism in South Korea, into context with other nations in East Asia and beyond." — Erica Vogel, *The Journal of Asian Studies* (August 2013) "Freeman has written a brilliant book that illuminates the complex dynamics not only of South Korea and Northeast Asia but of migration involving ethnic identification and state policy, as well as migrants, families left behind and forged anew, kinship ties claimed and disputed, marriages faked, broken, and made, and the larger world they navigate.... It is easily the best ethnography in Korean Studies to appear in some years and is therefore essential reading for anyone seeking to be conversant in Northeast Asia, migration, kinship, gender, family, and globalization." — John Lie, *Contemporary Sociology* (2013) "The influx of marriage and labor migrants to South Korea has been going on for more than twenty years beginning from the early 1990s, and a plethora of scholarly work has been produced both within and outside South Korea concerning these new migrants and related social and policy issues. Among these works, Caren Freeman's *Making and Faking Kinship: Marriage and Labor Migration between China and South Korea* stands out because of the author's fine ethnographic analysis, excellent historical mapping, and keen discursive analysis of what she describes as a "failed national experiment" (227)." — Seung-kyung Kim, *The Review of Korean Studies* (June 2014) "A remarkable book about Chinese Koreans' migrations to South Korea, *Making and Faking Kinship* brings to life the richness of kinship, family, and the nation on the move. Caren Freeman has a keen ethnographic eye and seasoned prose to match. I so enjoyed the intellectual and migrant journeys of this outstanding work. *Making and Faking Kinship* is full of ethnographic surprises, a number of which go far to unsettle facile thinking about gender, migration, nation, and family; it is a must-read!" — Nancy Abelmann, Harry E. Preble Professor of Anthropology and East Asian Languages & Cultures and Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign "Making and Faking Kinship makes a compelling contribution to the literature

on contemporary migration with its insightful exploration of the workings of gender and nationalism in the marriage and labor migration between China and South Korea. This book should be read by those interested in diaspora studies, gender and migration studies, and Asian migration studies." Rhacel Parrenas, University of Southern California

Caren Freeman is Director of Studies at Hereford Residential College and works in the International Studies Office at the University of Virginia.

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