

Peru, South Korea, Peru . . .

“They have the Bangladeshi,” Karina said. She had been at work but came rushing in to the small cottage where she lived to tell us that immigration officers were raiding the area. This was the second time in one day that the area had been raided. “I had to run from my factory earlier today and hide in the house for two hours,” she told me.

Everyone in the house—including her father and five other Peruvian men who had gathered to talk to me about their lives in Korea—started making calls on their cell phones. They were trying to contact the other Peruvians in the area to find out the location of the officers and determine whether the Bangladeshi man was someone they knew. “*Pasa la voz*,” they said to the people on the other end. Spread the word. Hide or run.

It was nine on a Thursday night in August 2007 and pitch-black outside the one-bedroom cottage Karina shared with her father, Victor, in a semirural area on the outskirts of Seoul. The hills around us were dotted with small factories about the size of temporary buildings used in American schools. These factories each employed a handful of Korean and foreign workers and produced things like mannequins, candles, small plastic products, and cardboard boxes. Some of the foreign workers were documented, but many others, like the Peruvians in this room, were not.

I had met the father and daughter pair a few weeks before at the Spanish-language Mass provided once a month for the Peruvian migrants working in this town. They had invited me to come over and see where they worked, and also to meet other Peruvians who worked in the area. They were from a pueblo joven in

Lima, and Victor was a central figure in the Peruvian Catholic community, having been in Korea since 1995, longer than many other Peruvians who were still there. For the past few days his factory had been working on a rush order, and he looked very tired. He was going to return to work that night after I left. In her early twenties, Karina was a cheerful person who was well loved by the Catholic clergy. She regularly cooked Peruvian food in the kitchen in their house and brought it to Mass to share with the other parishioners. I am not sure if that idea was hers or the nuns' to encourage attendance at the Mass. I asked her where she got hard-to-find ingredients like cilantro and *aji amarillo*, a yellow chili used in many Peruvian recipes. She told me she either substituted local ingredients, such as Korean green chili peppers, or had her mother send her spices in the mail. She got cilantro from a Bangladeshi man who had a small farm and store nearby. She cooked most of the food she and her father ate, as neither of them particularly liked the Korean meals provided for free at their workplaces—usually spicy kimchi, a clear soup, and rice.

Their stand-alone house with a full-size kitchen was not a typical place for migrant workers to live. Most of the other migrants I met rented small apartments or lived rent free in shipping containers located inside their factory walls. This house had been the factory owners' residence before they moved their family to a newer apartment in a better location. Victor was quick to point out that his Korean employers did not do anything for him out of kindness—and that included letting them live here. Factory owners were charged a fine of twenty million won per undocumented worker they were caught employing. It was in both the workers' and factories' best interests that the migrants remain hidden and continue working.

This cottage was in the shape of a square and divided into two rooms: a kitchen and a living space they used for sleeping and relaxing. The wood-paneled walls were decorated with things like a free calendar from the local bank and large framed photos of Karina and her sister and brother at different ages. Karina's younger siblings were in Peru with their mother. Victor hadn't seen his son in person since he was a newborn.

We were all sitting in the living space, which had two twin beds on opposite walls, a TV, and a computer with an internet connection. When I asked Victor if he was able to communicate with his wife and children in Peru, he said, "Almost every day. And we have a camera." He explained that this was a huge advance in the available technology from when he first arrived and had to wait in a long line to use the only pay phone in the area.

"When I first got here it cost 5,000 won for a phone card and you could only talk for ten minutes, or even three minutes if it was a bad card," he said. "There would be like ten or fifteen [foreigners] in line waiting to talk on the phone. Sometimes there were fights. [Other foreigners and Koreans] abused the Peruvians and even hit them," he said. "[When I first arrived] this area was all Bangladeshis. They

didn't want to have any other foreigners. It was bad. The Peruvians decided to have a meeting. We decided to walk together in a group to demonstrate that we weren't alone. To show that there were a lot of Peruvians here."

"It doesn't seem like I have been here that long because the weeks go by so fast," Victor said.

Victor and his friends sat on the floor, on kitchen chairs, and on the beds. Karina leaned against the door frame and occasionally disappeared into the kitchen to answer her cell phone. I was sitting in front of everyone on the swivel computer chair Victor had offered me when I arrived.

"You need that chair so you can take notes," Aldo, one of Victor's friends, said. He was a serious man who did not speak much, at least around me. His comment indicated to me the importance he was placing on this meeting. Everyone in the room looked exhausted from having worked all day in their respective factories. At their insistence we had begun the interview, but our conversation kept pausing as phone calls came in with updates.

During one of the pauses in conversation, I turned to Victor, who sat calmly on the floor. "People are outside right now?" I asked him quietly, imagining armed men blanketing the hills and winding roads. This was my second month of fieldwork, and one of the first times I had visited migrants in their home. I felt dread at the thought that everyone here might get caught because they had gathered in one place to talk to me. We had already rescheduled this meeting twice. Why did I have to come today?

"They are on the next hill over," Victor reassured me. "If they come over here, we can turn the lights out." As he had alluded, there did not seem to be anything more substantial than darkness separating us from the officers. We were close enough to see the glowing eyes of the dogs protecting the factories scattered among the hills, structures not much bigger than the house we were in now.

I had arrived by bus from Seoul around dusk. Victor's friend Javier had picked me up from the bus stop on his moped. In the fading light, I had seen that the road leading from the main street to the factories was dotted with low walls made of stone and concrete that divided the small farms and factories. After driving for about ten minutes and deftly avoiding the arms of lush foliage that reached out over the walls into the road, Javier parked the moped. He led me up a steep dirt path to the house. Big flying insects I had never seen in the city hit me in the face and buzzed by my ears. Victor's factory and house were adjacent to each other, and between them was a stack of boxlike cages holding five dogs, all of whom barked furiously at us as we passed. They ranged in size from what looked like large Korean jindo mixes to tiny lap dogs. Ernesto, a Peruvian man who lived in Seoul, but who had insisted on joining us for this meeting, laughed when I stopped to look at them.

"Don't you know, [the Koreans] are going to eat them when they get a little bigger," he said. I looked back at the dogs skeptically—especially the little Maltese mix.

Javier ignored Ernesto's comment and told us that the dogs were set up outside the factory along with security cameras to alert workers when immigration officers, or other people, approached.

Now as I sat in the small cottage, hoping the dogs outside would not start barking, I remembered naively thinking that they and the terrain had seemed quaint to me earlier in the day.

Javier told me raids like this were frequent here.

"Last week immigration officers parked at the mouth of that road and just waited for foreigners to come down the hill," he said. At the time there was a single road that ran above and below the hilly area where everyone lived and worked. That road was the only way to get out of town, or reach the town's churches, restaurants, and small local supermarket.

"We called friends and they told us 'Don't go to the church to hide! *¡Pasa la voz!* Because there were three combis of immigration officers waiting right in front of the church," Javier told me. "We could see the flashing red lights from their vehicles all the way up here" he said. "[Immigration officers] are very abusive. They hit people in the head with big sticks."

They described how plainclothes officers would walk along the streets and grab people as they shopped or waited for the bus in front of the church.

"The bus stop in front of the Catholic Church is actually the most dangerous place in town!" Karina said.

"Why did you ask me to wait there?" I asked, thinking about the extra danger Javier had faced by driving his moped there. "I could have waited somewhere else."

"It's safe for you!" Karina said, smiling.

Paulo, who was sitting on the floor, told me about how his friend had been detained right at that bus stop. "She looked like a regular, nice, Korean lady," he said, describing the plainclothes officer who had caught his friend. "She said hello, and when he responded, she grabbed him."

They told me that during raids officers wore "sticky gloves," which they described as work gloves that were coated with a substance that increased their grip. With these sticky gloves, an officer could grab a person's shoulder from behind—even someone who was running away—and pull them to the ground.

Angel, a man who worked with Victor, told me about his own near deportation. It was one Sunday when he was grocery shopping. Officers had parked paddy wagons on the main road and loaded them up with the people they detained over the course of the day. "I heard a Filipino man just screaming and crying from inside the paddy wagon," he said. Angel had hidden in time, but had to watch as his neighbors were taken away.

I could feel my own anxiety rise as we sat there. I was waiting for what seemed like an inevitable knock at the door, but hoping none would come.

"How long can you take the stress of this?" I asked.

"Until we get deported," Javier said frankly.

Then Aldo spoke up again. “Two years ago it was so peaceful here. Immigration was a rarity, once in a long time.”

Both he and Victor had been in Korea for twelve years, spending all but the first three months—when they had valid tourist stamps in their passports—without legal status. They told me that prior to the IMF, the streets of their rural town were full of people from all over the world—including groups of Peruvians. Sometimes over a hundred Peruvians would gather from all over to Korea for activities like soccer tournaments, *parrilladas* (barbeques), and *polladas* (events where people sell grilled chicken to raise money for a particular cause, such as a new baby or a person in immigration detention who needed a plane ticket home). However, they now dealt with the reality of immigration officers watching them from the roads above and below their factories and homes, waiting until the right moment to detain and deport them.

When I reviewed my field notes from this night, I was struck by how it was filled with both moments of normalcy and fear. Discussions of food, people’s first impressions of Korea, and their expressions of pride for their jobs were interlaced with phone calls and warnings of imminent danger. Their need to be invisible—keep the lights out and stay hidden to remain in Korea—was put into relief by their stories of being visible and making their mark on the streets of their rural area. Victor and Aldo’s daily lives in Korea had changed dramatically since they had arrived, and that experience was inextricable from the turbulent political and economic situation of Peru and South Korea between the 1980s and the first decade of the 2000s.

In this chapter I explore the ways migrants’ journeys and travel itineraries overlapped and converged with the global plans and political economies of Peru and South Korea to discuss how the migration pattern began and has been nearly stopped—all while remaining fairly unknown outside a few sending and receiving communities. I present various arrival stories of Peruvian migrants to discuss how the trajectory of people’s lives and plans changed within this unstable transnational context and depending on the ways they interacted with global plans of the Korean state and various churches as well as others they met along the way. I pay particular attention to the ways Peruvian migrants experienced the effects of the Employee Permit System, the push for multiculturalism, and practices and policies that gained traction as a result of Korea’s rising numbers of foreign migrants. I argue that by migrating to Korea and continuing to participate in life there and transnationally in Peru despite facing multiple barriers, they created and elucidated transnational ties between the two countries, and in turn changed the significance and value of Korea in Peru. However, since they did this while under multiple forms of surveillance, they had to negotiate between constantly changing levels of freedom and fear and inclusion and exclusion, which resulted in the creation of uneven transnational spaces and ties, and changes to the significance of their migration.

The geography of the worlds and transnational ties migrants created is most visible in Norte Chico, the area where many Peruvians in Korea originated from, as well as, at least symbolically, in Dongducheon, an imagined Korean-based hometown for many Peruvians. I present scenes from those areas to talk about how while the migration from Peru to Korea was not well known in either country, it becomes visible and takes on meaning when placed at the neighborhood level and can be compared to other migrations, experiences, or even tangible evidence of migration such as homes or businesses catering to or built by migrant families.

ARRIVAL STRATEGIES AND ITINERARIES: 1990s TO 2000s

Immigration officers never came to Karina and Victor's house that night. When calls came in from their friends in town confirming that the officers had left, and no one they knew had been detained, everyone appeared to relax, including me.

The people gathered in Victor's house started to tell me about their migration journeys and the strategies they had taken to successfully pass as tourists at the Korean airport. The people who had arrived in the mid-1990s, like Victor, had a much different arrival experience than those who came later, like Victor's daughter Karina, who had arrived in 2003. These differences were due to their varying levels of knowledge about Korea, changes to the Korean economy, and also the changing profile of Peruvians and other foreigners in Korea.

"It was easy for me to get in, but now it's really controlled," Victor said. He had arrived at Seoul's Gimpo Airport on the same plane with twenty other Peruvians who were all looking for work. "Now, many people are unable to get in and have to go back to Peru. But some also just change their last names and try again," Victor said.

What he meant was that in the mid-1990s, the migrant population in Korea was relatively new, and it was fairly easy for Peruvians to enter by posing as tourists. Since Peru has a visa waiver agreement with South Korea, Peruvian citizens do not need to apply for a separate tourist visa prior to arrival, but instead they are given a three-month tourist stamp in their passports on entry. Peruvians were not the only migrant group in Korea to do this, and overstaying three-month tourist visas is common for groups with many undocumented workers like Nigerians and Filipinos.¹ However, Peru was one of the few countries in South America with a visa-waiver agreement with South Korea. This was one reason that I met a few Bolivians and Colombians who were working as undocumented laborers, but their numbers were tiny in comparison to the large community of Peruvians.

In order to get past the immigration checkpoint in the airport and receive a tourist visa, passengers have to prove they are actually tourists and not intending to find work and overstay. To present themselves as "authentic" tourists, many people told me they had worn their best clothes to go through immigration and

tried to carry at least \$1,000 in cash, which they called their *bolsa de viaje* (travel money). Although this money was supposed to prove they had sufficient funds to support themselves while visiting South Korea, most migrants feared having to actually spend this money. That is because they had usually borrowed it, along with money for their plane ticket and broker's fee, from family members, friends, or moneylenders prior to leaving Peru. The hope was to find a job on arrival and never have to touch the *bolsa de viaje*. Anticipation over whether a migrant would successfully pass through immigration and thereby be able to repay their travel debts figured into nearly every arrival story I heard.

Aldo, who arrived in the mid-1990s, described how for the people on his flight, the stress of arriving and not knowing if they would be admitted was both a shared and isolating experience. "There were fifty Peruvians on my plane," he said. "When we left Peru, everyone was dressed normally. Then the closer we got to Seoul, they went to the bathroom one by one and came out nicely dressed. In the plane we were friends, but when we arrived, the friendship disappeared," Aldo continued. "It was like a bomb exploded. Everyone ignored each other, and just looked for the best [immigration] window."

Most everyone I met who had arrived in the 1990s mentioned there was a good chance most of the Peruvians on a given flight would be permitted to enter Korea. This was perhaps because immigration officers did not yet know that Peruvians were most likely intending migrants. Similarly, Peruvian migrants who wanted to migrate to Korea in the 1990s also did not know much about the country, which set them up to be easily preyed on by people looking to profit from their partial knowledge.

In my research I found that the majority of Peruvians who arrived before the 1997 IMF (discussed briefly later in this chapter) had learned about Korea through unscrupulous brokers, and in undertaking their trip they were each scammed out of between \$1,000 and \$4,000. While countries like Nepal had organized systems of recruiters that charged migrants fees for help in getting employment visas to Korea, the brokers in Peru were laypeople who had no actual ability to secure visas and often had no real job contacts for their recruits.² Many of these brokers either had connections to earlier migrations to Japan or had just been lucky enough to hear about Korea before their neighbors. They took advantage of the lack of awareness in Peru about Korea, and the excitement about migrating to Japan, to get people to pay them for basic or false information.

Angel, who was from Norte Chico, said, "In Peru we didn't know anything about Korea. There were people who had been in Korea and these people took advantage of the situation to bring people to work there. They brought us in a group. They tricked us. I met a woman of Japanese descent who told us that she was with a job agency in Korea. 'You know about Korea, don't you?' she asked us. We had to pay her \$3,000 for the paperwork [and \$1,700 for the ticket]. Well the day came to travel, we got to Korea and found out everything was a lie."

“There was no job?” I asked.

“No, she only *knew* a man who worked here. This guy sold accessories in the street. She knew him but there wasn’t any job at all. She took us to a hotel in Chongno-3ga and left us there. It was November. We didn’t know the language, and we didn’t know anything about Korea. And we didn’t even know what the food was. The only food we had was *Kentucky* [Kentucky Fried Chicken]; breakfast, dinner, and lunch was *Kentucky*. This was our food. We didn’t know!” he said laughing.

“Can you stomach *Kentucky* now?” I asked, laughing.

“I still like it for a special occasion,” he said, smiling.³

“Were all the other people still with you?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said. “There were six of us. We were waiting for a contact to give us work. We waited for one week. We realized that our money was running out. We had a *bolsa de viaje* that was very small. It was hardly anything at all, so we decided to find a hostel. There we met Iranians and other foreigners. Americans working as teachers too. We were there only one day because the atmosphere was very dangerous. People came and went. We were afraid we would get something stolen. But there we met a Peruvian. And he told us about [this town].”

Victor was also scammed by a broker he met in his pueblo joven who promised to get him a visa and job for a fee. “I paid him \$4,000 before we left Peru. He told us we would make \$1,000 USD a month. But in the end, it was actually one million won, which at that time was [worth much less].” Only after Victor arrived in Seoul did he realize they were getting a free tourist visa through the visa waiver agreement, not a work visa. He worked at that job for a few days before finding a new job through word of mouth.

Many Peruvians told me they eventually heard about reliable work through chance encounters with other Peruvians on the street or public transportation. These new friends would tell them where factories with lots of Peruvians were—sometimes insisting on a broker’s fee in exchange for this information. In fact, one man I talked to in Norte Chico laughed when he told me a man who had told him about a factory job fifteen years prior was still trying to collect a large broker’s fee from him. Neither of them had been in Korea for years.

Those who were able to find employment despite these scams were only able to work a couple of years before the Asian financial crisis shook the economy. Factories closed and migrants lost their jobs. Many Peruvians left, but according to one of my interviewees, some nearly starved to death trying to remain in Korea until the economy recovered.

When the Korean economy recovered in the 2000s, however, the Peruvian community grew bigger than ever before. For those who arrived in the 2000s, their arrival stories were usually more about chain migration and family reunifications and less about scams and brokers. However, since undocumented migrant workers were gaining visibility in Korea, it also became much harder to successfully

pass through immigration as a tourist. As a result, migrant lay expertise about how to enter Korea grew during this time. In his work about migrants crossing the US-Mexico border, anthropologist Jason De León found that migrants and merchants developed their own technologies to evade the US government's vast surveillance technologies. He points out that these migrant strategies—such as painting water bottles black to avoid detection or rubbing garlic on one's shoes to avoid snake-bites—persist despite lacking empirical evidence of their success.⁴ Peruvians also drew on their own migration journeys and their growing knowledge of Korea to develop creative strategies and technologies to help their family members counteract surveillance at the airport and successfully pass as tourists—but with inconsistent results.

For example, on her father's advice, Karina had memorized a few phrases in English—about where she was from, or sites in Korea she was planning to visit—to prove she was prepared to travel internationally. Some travelers even made fake reservations at hotels—like the Hamilton in Itaewon—or bought tickets to upcoming events, such as the 2002 World Cup. These strategies did not always work, though, and intending migrants who failed to pass as tourists were refused entry, handcuffed, and forced to wait in a room in the airport, sometimes for days, until there was an available flight home.

Karina told us about her experience of nearly being turned away. "I didn't think I was going to make it through," she said. Like many other Peruvians, Karina had strategically planned her arrival in the Korean fall or winter months, hoping that immigration officers would be more lenient or understaffed during the holidays of Chuseok and Lunar New Year. November to January were warm summer months in Peru, so another commonality was that people arriving at that time were largely unprepared for the harsh Korean winter. For example, a woman from Norte Chico told me that the hotel owner where she first went in Seoul, shocked to see her arrive in the jeans and light jacket that she had considered to be "winter clothes" in Peru, gave her some clothes to wear from her own closet.

Upon advice from her dad, Karina had bought a two-week round-trip ticket instead of a ticket for the full three months allowed for someone coming as a tourist. She told us she thought this strategy had worked in her favor for passing as a tourist.

"There were five other Peruvian girls on the flight, and I think only two had real reasons for being there. The rest of us were planning to overstay," she said. She picked an immigration line and ended up being the very last person from her flight to get to an immigration officer. All the other girls got through with no problem, but Karina got sent to a secondary check station—a back room where she had to answer more in-depth questions about her trip. She had heard this meant she would probably be refused entry. The immigration officers wanted to talk to the person who was going to pick her up. There was a Spanish translator in the room and Karina finally gave him Victor's phone number.

“I was waiting at the airport and was getting more and more nervous,” Victor said. People from her flight had stopped coming out, but Karina still hadn’t appeared. My phone rang and it was immigration!” They wanted to know his name and relation to her. He said that Karina was his friend’s daughter and that he had agreed to take care of her because the friend had been so good to him before in Korea. They finally let her through, and she had been working at her factory ever since.

PLANS FOR MIGRANTS IN SOUTH KOREA:
THE EMPLOYEE PERMIT SYSTEM AND
MULTICULTURALISM

The differences in Peruvian arrival stories from the 1990s and 2000s reflected massive changes happening in South Korea during this time. As the economy improved in the late 1980s, the number of foreigners in Korea rose. Over the next twenty years, the state developed various surveillance and control mechanisms in the form of migration policies and multicultural programs. As atypical migrant workers in Korea, Peruvians were both included in and excluded from these policies, which resulted in them having experiences like that night at Victor and Karina’s house—filled with both freedom and danger.

In comparison to the other migrant-receiving nations, Korea has had a relatively short experience of migration. The Korean economy was not in the position to receive labor until they had an increase in exports after hosting the 1988 Olympics. Prior to this, South Korea had been a labor-exporting country, sending laborers to places like Saudi Arabia to do construction and to Germany to work as nurses.⁵ Starting in the late 1980s, foreign migrant workers arrived to fill the gap between the increasing availability of low-skilled jobs in small- and medium-sized factories and the shortage of Korean workers.

In the early 1990s, the number of undocumented workers in South Korea started to balloon, partly due to a policy the government implemented in hopes of securing a cheap source of foreign labor. This policy, the Industrial Technical Trainee Program (ITTP), was modeled after a similar program in Japan and stayed in effect from 1991 to 2006. The ITTP was an abusive system where foreigners were classified as “trainees” rather than laborers, which blocked them from having many rights earned by Korean laborers such as collective bargaining. Foreign “trainees” were given pocket money rather than wages and were prohibited from changing factories, no matter the working conditions. Since ITTP trainees could make more money as undocumented workers, many abandoned their positions and found other factory jobs—thereby increasing the overall numbers of undocumented workers in Korea. They joined other foreigners who had overstayed tourist visas, including men and women from an estimated fifty-four different countries, including China, Congo, Nigeria, Russia, Afghanistan, Brazil, and even Jamaica.⁶

The number of foreign workers in South Korea had been growing rapidly until the Asian financial crisis (known as the IMF for the subsequent interventions of the International Monetary Fund) hit in December 1997, reducing jobs and gutting the value of the Korean won. During the IMF, an estimated half of all undocumented workers who had been in the country either voluntarily departed due to job shortages or were detained and deported.⁷ Just as the Peruvian community grew again along with the economy—reaching an estimated four thousand people,⁸ so too did the overall number of foreign workers in Korea. By 2002, Korea's number of foreign migrants had surpassed pre-IMF numbers.

Until the 1990s, for both trainees and undocumented workers, there had been frequent reports of violence and abusive treatment, unpaid wages, and serious injuries in Korean factories.⁹ In an attempt to manage the growing numbers of migrants and raise their global profile, Korea implemented a guest worker policy, the Employee Permit System (EPS) in 2004, which I see as part of Korea's cosmopolitan conversion project—promoted as a cutting-edge solution to simultaneously protecting the human rights of migrant workers and meeting Korea's need for unskilled labor. It was referred to by a Korean publication as “the most advanced in the world.”¹⁰ It was also promoted to other countries, like Malaysia, as an enviable solution for them to adopt. Apart from the EPS, the Korean government promoted at least one more of its immigration practices to other countries as innovative and worthy of replication. In 2006 the Korean Ministry of Justice invited Peruvian embassy personnel to the inauguration ceremony for KISS (the Korea Immigration Smart Service), which they said had “won the best scores for Customer Satisfaction in the world” and was an “innovation of Border Service.” The ceremony to celebrate a brand name for this innovation and share it with the world was held on the significant date of September 11.¹¹

Although billed as innovative, only certain migrants were allowed to participate in the EPS, and the criteria were based on nationality (primarily from Asia), gender (male), and age (eighteen to forty years old). The eligible countries were chosen based on proximity to South Korea or the prominence of the population already there, but a member of the Ministry of Justice I spoke with mentioned that the factory owners also had a racial preference for Asian workers because they felt uncomfortable disciplining non-Asians. Therefore, citizens of countries like Peru and Nigeria were not included in the Employee Permit System. While a few Peruvians I met had other visas—business visas, unexpired tourist visas, student visas, or had married Korean or US citizens and adjusted their status through them—after 2004, many of the Peruvians in Korea were undocumented with no apparent chance of becoming documented.¹²

Some Peruvians who opted to remain in Korea after 2004 were relatively easy for immigration officers to find because they had registered their whereabouts during the temporary amnesty the government implemented in preparation for the Employee Permit System. The terms of the amnesty were that no matter their

country of origin, an undocumented person could apply for an E-9 Unskilled Labor visa, which allowed them to work in certain industries in Korea for “up to two years, if the total period of his/her stay does not exceed five years,” granted they had “stayed in Korea for less than three years as of March 31, 2003.”¹³ The idea seemed to be that at the end of the amnesty period, all of the undocumented migrant workers would be first documented, and counted, and then they would return to their home countries—either by choice or by force. Those who received the E-9 visa enjoyed a year or two of documented status in Korea and even had a chance to make short trips to Peru and return to their jobs. However, the E-9 visa came with consequences. I heard from numerous Peruvians that immigration vans had arrived in front of their factories soon after the Employee Permit System went into effect, and officers had lists with the names of people who had registered for the E-9 visa but failed to depart on time. In trying to attempt a cosmopolitan conversion and gain institutionalized cultural capital, those Peruvians who received this visa contributed to the state’s surveillance apparatus and their own exclusion.

Padre Ignacio and other clergy had told me that immigration officers seemed to have a quota on the numbers of undocumented migrants they detained in a given period—with surges of deportations in the summer and the holidays. I had a chance to ask Ms. Kim, a member of the Ministry of Justice, about this during the summer of 2006. I was curious how they could promote themselves as being exemplary in their humane treatment of migrant workers and simultaneously launch aggressive raids to round them up.

Ms. Kim denied the existence of a quota for deportations. Then, I did not detect a hint of irony in her voice when she told me that undocumented migrants were being deported for their own protection—and for the well-being of all migrants in Korea. She said that documenting all migrant workers was the only way to ensure they were “under the umbrella” of human rights protections, which included things like health care, regular wages, and protection from abusive, exploitative, or unsafe conditions in factories.

“If we can’t see them, we can’t protect them,” she said. This sentiment was similar to the one presented by the director general of the Immigration Bureau in his opening remarks for the Ministry of Labor’s 6th Immigration Policy Forum in April 2005. According to an English version of his remarks: “If we successfully reduce the number of illegal stayers, it is not just for the number itself. We, [the] immigration bureau, could allocate more human resource[s] to legal stayers. . . . We, [the] Korean government, could import more foreign laborers through legal programs. We, [the] Korean people, could exchange better [warmth with migrant workers].”¹⁴ What both he and Ms. Kim left unsaid was that documentation would certainly not be extended to all intending migrants. And Peruvians would most likely never be included in the EPS. So, in order to be able to say that all migrant workers in South Korea had their human rights protected, all the

ones who were ineligible for visas needed to voluntarily depart, or be deported. That included Peruvians.

Ironically, it was often the people like Victor, who had been ineligible for any kind of documentation—because they had been in Korea too long to qualify for the E-9 visa—who were able to protect themselves by evading detection the longest. That is because they had often found a reliable job they stayed in for years, spoke some Korean, and had not made themselves visible to the Korean government since they had arrived as tourists decades earlier.

Other types of Peruvian migrants who had maintained long-term ties in Korea were those who had met and married Korean citizens soon after they arrived. Often, they continued to work in factories and socialize with undocumented friends and family members, but they had applied for and received Korean citizenship through their spouses. In some ways, like Victor, they had survived by making their Peruvianness invisible. When I asked one of my key informants why she had not attended the Peru Day celebration held by the embassy and Catholic Church, she said coldly that the embassy never contacted her since she was no longer Peruvian. When I asked her to clarify, she said that what she meant was once she had become a Korean citizen (and renounced her Peruvian citizenship), she was no longer considered part of that group.

Despite feeling removed from her Peruvian identity, she and other marriage migrants had been included in South Korea precisely because of their foreignness. In the 2000s, the concept of multiculturalism became incredibly popular in South Korea partly in response to the increasing number of foreign migrant workers and growing numbers of foreign women—particularly Joseonjok (ethnically Korean Chinese)—who were allowed in as marriage migrants to combat the rural bride shortage and a declining fertility rate.¹⁵ In discussing the rise of multicultural fever in Korea, sociologist Nora Hui-Jung Kim calculated that the use of the word *multicultural* increased in the Korean press from 235 instances in 1999 to 19,233 times in 2006.¹⁶ A governmental focus on globalization (*seghyewha*) had also raised the numbers of return migrants to Korea from foreign countries, with a preference for those who had gone to the United States. For example, Koreans who had been sent overseas as international adoptees were targeted to return to South Korea and bring their cultural capital with them to help fuel Korea's globalization project.¹⁷ In writing about South Korea's transition from being a labor exporter to importer, political scientist Timothy Lim finds that their relatively "late migration" affected the way the government tried to deal with foreign migrants. The South Korean government promoted the idea of multiculturalism (*tamunwha*) as a way to distance itself from what was thought of as a non-Western backward treatment of foreigners.¹⁸

The new attention to multiculturalism was notable because it addressed the obvious challenges foreign brides and multiracial Koreans were making to the previously dominant narrative of Korea being an ethnically homogenous coun-

try. However, as anthropologist Hyun Mee Kim argues, rather than marking an attempt to promote understandings of multiple identities or experiences in Korea, the actual effects of multicultural projects—such as offering free Korean cooking classes—went toward assimilating foreign wives into Korean culture.¹⁹ Anthropologist EuyRyung Jun conducted ethnographic fieldwork on some of these government-funded multicultural projects and found that they were not even really about affecting the lives of foreigners but rather aimed at preparing the *Koreans* who helped to organize them to deal with an inevitable globalization.²⁰

BEATRIZ'S STORY

As Peruvian migrants continued to build their communities in Korea in the 2000s, their trajectories became interlaced with state and church projects for dealing with multiculturalism and globalization. Yet not all Peruvians had the same experiences in Korea—even those who had arrived at the same time. As sociologist John Lie points out, South Korea's multiculturalism wave was contradictory in that it simultaneously promoted the inclusion of foreign spouses and their children while excluding, and permitting the mistreatment of, foreign workers.²¹

While my vignette at Victor and Karina's house at the beginning of this chapter illustrated life in the multicultural moment as experienced by undocumented migrants, an afternoon I spent with Beatriz, a Peruvian woman from Norte Chico who had married a Korean man, illustrated life in the other side of this duality. Like Victor, Beatriz, who had arrived in 1996 as a twenty-three-year-old, was part of a broker scam. However, almost as soon as she arrived, she met and fell in love with a young Korean man who worked at her factory. She overstayed her tourist visa and became undocumented, but they quickly married and she applied to become a Korean citizen. Apart from one trip back to Peru to visit her parents, she had been in Korea for most of her adult life. She now spoke Korean fluently and was not only a member of Friendship Ministry but also part of a Korean church. When she first got married, she and her husband had lived in a very rural area, which she referred to as *la provincia*.²² She had attended a Korean church there, as there were no churches catering to foreigners and it had been her only option. She found that she "enjoyed the way [Korean people] worshipped," and so when her family moved to this area, even though she joined Friendship Ministry, she had sought out a separate Korean church as well. She felt accepted in different ways at these two churches. At Friendship, she had Peruvian and other international friends, but it mostly catered to single migrants. In contrast, the Korean church's congregation was primarily families who could better relate to her life as a married woman with a child.

I had known Beatriz for a couple of years when she invited me over to visit her at the new apartment she and her husband had purchased with the help of a government program. When I saw her at church one day in May 2009, she told me

she had just found out she was pregnant with her second child, and her husband did not want her to work. She said that since she was bored at home, I should come over for lunch.

On the day of my visit I stopped by the outdoor market set up along the main street of her town—the same streets where Victor and his friends had described plainclothes officers patrolling on the night of the raid. I did not see any other foreigners here though, probably because it was midday on a Tuesday and everyone was at work. I quickly browsed the items Korean vendors had displayed on boxes and tarps on the sidewalk—piles of apples, bananas, and large purple grapes as well as bundles of simple cooking utensils like plastic strainers and bamboo spoons. At church, Beatriz had mentioned she had pregnancy cravings for watermelon, so I picked one out and headed to wait for the local bus she had told me to take the rest of the way to her house. Once it arrived, I rode the local bus for about thirty minutes, bumping through an area that appeared to be transitioning from farmland to the suburbs. I got off the bus and almost immediately realized I had gotten off too early. After walking for twenty more minutes and sweating in the summer heat and humidity, I considered tossing the watermelon—which seemed to be getting heavier by the minute—into the bushes. I finally pulled out my cell phone to call Beatriz for help. I described my surroundings to her and she told me to wait.

“It’s actually good you got off at the wrong stop,” she said, giving me a hug. “On my way here I saw an advertisement for a little *arbeit*.” She held up a scrap of paper with a short job description handwritten in Hangul. It was faded from being out in the sun and looked like it had been pinned to a board for a while. As we walked to her apartment building, she exchanged greetings with her Korean neighbors. I noted that while I stuck out in this neighborhood, Beatriz looked like she fit in very comfortably.

Her high-rise apartment building was newly constructed and part of a large complex. At the entrance to the building there was a small grocery store that stocked snacks and staples like rice, cooking oil, and a few baskets of loose produce items such as carrots and potatoes that still had traces of the dirt from the fields where they were grown. Beatriz was going to show me how to prepare *tallarines en salsa roja* (pasta in red sauce) from a Peruvian recipe book that her mother had slipped into her suitcase when she first left Peru years ago. She told me she had to refer to the instructions in the book because she usually only cooked Korean food.

“I love my *kinchi*, my *jjiggae*, my *ramyeon*,” she said, pronouncing kimchi with an “n,” which many Spanish speakers did. She almost never ate Peruvian food anymore.

She told me that she had loved participating in the multicultural projects sponsored by the Korean government—including cooking classes where she learned how to prepare kimchi and other Korean foods for her husband.

I had to contain my surprise at the unqualified appreciation Beatriz had for these classes. Before this I had only heard of these classes within a social science

critique of their assimilationist mission. I also knew Beatriz to speak frankly about the experiences—positive and negative—she had in her churches and community. Her seemingly genuine gratefulness for the information she learned there as well as the occasional free food (rice and kimchi) she received from some state-sponsored programs made me understand they were also filling a real need for her family.

We went in the store to buy soft drinks to go with our lunch.

Two elderly Korean men were sitting outside of the store on plastic stools. They greeted us flirtatiously in Korean. Beatriz acknowledged them but did not greet them warmly as she had the other neighbors.

The shop owner was standing behind the register. When we brought up our bottle of Chilsung Cider to the counter, he rang us up and put it in a black plastic bag.

“Where are you from?” he asked us. “Why are you here?”

Beatriz told him in Korean that she lived there with her family. “You know that,” she said. She took the bag and led us out of the store.

She sounded annoyed as she told me in Spanish that typically the owner did not try to flirt with her because his wife was usually there too. I regretted that my presence seemed to be exacerbating the differences she felt in her daily interactions here as a foreign-born woman.

As we walked to her apartment, she explained that this was uncomfortable, but nothing compared to what she faced years prior when she and her husband lived in *la provincia*. At that place she had numerous Peruvian friends—mostly men—who worked with her. Her brother had also just arrived from Peru and lived with her and her husband. After work she and the other Peruvians would go to the convenience store by their apartment to buy snacks like popsicles or chips. She could tell that the Koreans who worked there were talking about her, but she did not know what they were saying. Then over time, as she learned more Korean, she realized they thought she was having sex with all of the different men they saw her with.

Beatriz laughed as she told me this story.

“*This lady is so easy, she is always in here with a different guy,*” they said. She tried to explain that the men were just her friends, but the gossiping neighbors did not believe her. “*She is taking their money from them,*” they would say.

Then one day she went in to the store with her husband, who is short, and they were even more shocked. They said, “*Look at this poor little guy. She is robbing him of his money!*” She had to explain to them that he was her husband. However, she became serious when she told me that she had been happy when they left *la provincia* because the neighborhood children had been unkind to her family for being different.

Although they lived minutes from each other in Korea, Beatriz and Victor had become involved in two different aspects of South Korea’s multicultural projects,

and had each been “socially absented” to varying degrees, so were often part of different worlds even as they occupied the same space.²³

I never saw Victor and Beatriz socialize, but they knew some of the same people in Korea and Peru. Despite having different legal statuses, Victor and Beatriz were both under surveillance and had to negotiate between freedom and fear. While he was trying to remain invisible, she was making her mark on her community in Korea. Beatriz was under surveillance as a foreign wife in Korea—her actions were watched and managed by the state through multicultural programs, and by her neighbors through comments and daily interactions. She was legally included, having obtained Korean citizenship through her husband, yet still excluded every day as she raised her family. Her neighbors treated her as if she belonged, yet she and her children also stood out. For both Victor and Beatriz, their lives and families had changed because they were in Korea, and Korea had changed because they were there—but they had helped to create different transnational networks.

Their networks intersected, however, because like most of the Peruvians I knew in Korea, Beatriz and Victor belonged to mixed-status families and social groups. They interacted with both undocumented and documented migrant workers and with Koreans at work, at church, in their towns, and even at home. Despite being part of groups treated very differently under multicultural programs—foreign wives and migrant laborers—they simultaneously experienced the inclusion and exclusion of Korea and its multicultural moment through their relationships with others. Since marrying her Korean husband and having children, Beatriz had been included in legal and cultural projects meant to help assimilate her into the Korean family. Yet, she also felt uncomfortable with her neighbors’ recognition of and discrimination against her family’s differences. As a Peruvian man who had managed to remain in Korea for many years undocumented and undetected, Victor was part of Korea’s wave of low-paid migrant laborers and also relatively invisible within it.

LEAVING PERU: “YOU HAVE TO REALIZE ALL THESE DESTINATIONS AREN’T THE SAME”

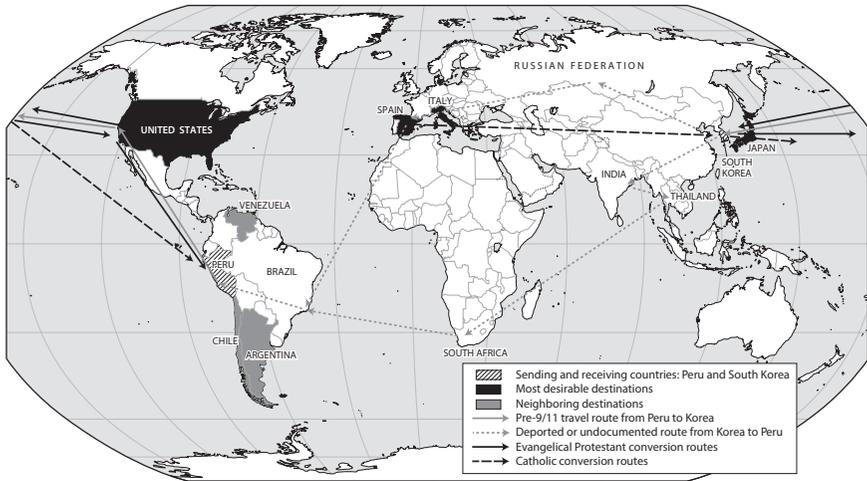
Although they had not known each other prior to migration, it was not a coincidence that Beatriz and Victor had both arrived in Korea in the mid-1990s. At the time, out-migration was at a fever pitch in Peru, and since they were part of the lower middle class, they had fewer migration options than members of the upper class. While their limited economic and cultural capital excluded them from migrating legally to the most prestigious destinations for Peruvians like the United States, it also made them look beyond popular, but less prestigious, destinations like Argentina to find South Korea.

While in the 1980s South Korea shifted from an immigrant-exporting to a migrant-receiving nation for the first time, Peru was doing the opposite. Historically Peru had brought settlers, conscripted laborers, and slaves from Europe,

Asia, and Africa, but starting in the 1980s, Peru experienced social and economic instability that prompted an acute trend toward out-migration.²⁴ One catalyst was that the civil war launched from Peru's highlands by the Maoist terrorist group Shining Path, or Sendero Luminoso, left 69,280 people dead and forced people from the highlands into the pueblos jóvenes of Peru. As anthropologist Kimberly Theidon notes, Peruvians are still processing the violence committed by the military, guerrillas, and everyday *campesinos* during this conflict.²⁵ The conflict sparked an exodus of people escaping violence and financial insecurity and had long-term consequences on internal and external migration. Added to this were the economic policies that failed during former Peruvian president Alan García's first term (1985–90), which resulted in hyperinflation. The people who were first able to escape these problems were members of the upper and middle classes who qualified for US tourist visas. Not surprisingly then, the first wave of Peruvian emigrants primarily went to the United States and consisted of people who were wealthier and better educated than most other Peruvians.²⁶ Many had held professional jobs in Peru before reaching the United States, where they were forced to accept low-paying unskilled labor jobs, a phenomenon that caught the attention of ethnographers.²⁷ More recent studies of Peruvian migration have shifted away from these upper-class migrants to explore the experiences of other groups, including racialized Peruvian migrants from the highlands who travel to the United States.²⁸

Unlike other labor-exporting nations such as Mexico and El Salvador, which send migrants to one or two main destinations (for example, 98 percent of Mexican migrants are in the United States), Peru stands out for having migrants “scattered” all over the world in at least twenty-five countries.²⁹ However, apart from the families I worked with in Peru, hardly anyone else I spoke to in Peru had heard that there were Peruvians in Korea. It was not common knowledge. People were not surprised to hear about it once I told them, though. For example, when I told the landlady of my San Miguel apartment that I was researching Peruvian migration to South Korea, she raised a manicured hand dismissively and said a phrase I heard frequently, “There are Peruvians all over the world.” She managed our apartment for her brother who had migrated to Ireland in the early 2000s and married an Irish woman. She told me that the whole building was filled with Peruvians who had lived abroad themselves or received remittances from family members. She collected the rent in US dollars. Not just migration, but migration to widespread destinations, was quotidian.

While there were Peruvians all over the world, that does not mean that all destinations were equal. Further, however dispersed Peruvian migrants are or imagine themselves to be, there are certain points on the globe that have concentrations of Peruvians and are considered to be more desirable migration destinations than other places. The most sought-after places are the United States (1.3 million Peruvian migrants), Spain (120,300), Italy (70,800), and Japan (60,000). Those Peruvians who want to migrate but who do not have many resources go to nearby



MAP 1. Peruvian migration destinations. Map courtesy of University of Texas Libraries.

places like Chile (62,000) and Argentina (100,000).³⁰ In his book on migrant remittances in Peru, Karsten Paerregaard argues that families with migrants and their neighbors place different values on remittances depending on which destination they come from. Remittances from Japan are valued the highest because they come from a prestigious destination with a high salary, while remittances from the United States and Europe rank lower, and then those sent from Argentina and Chile are ranked at the bottom.³¹

The popularity of these destinations also changes with the geopolitical climate. For example, given the instability in Venezuela since the installation of President Maduro's government in 2013, I have not heard of any of my interviewees talk about people migrating there for work. However, in 2006 Peruvians in Peru and South Korea told me about Venezuela as being a great option for migration not because of high salaries but because it was like a "trampoline" that let them jump to better destinations. They had heard that Venezuela offered migrants a pathway to citizenship, and Venezuelan citizenship could be parlayed into citizenship in Italy—a more prestigious destination. This was similar to what Vanessa Fong found in her research with Chinese students who dreamed of studying abroad to enhance their citizenship both abroad and in China.³² Although the Chinese students used the term *waiguo* (abroad) to refer to all developed countries, they had ranked destinations based on their relative amount of geopolitical power and visa opportunities. Students did not always end up in their first choice. Like these students, through their years of experience searching for the best migration plan available to them, many of the Peruvian families I spoke with had become lay experts on the changing laws, economics, and political relationships of numerous nations worldwide—and

they contributed to this knowledge as they shared it with others. After failing to reach other, better places, South Korea emerged for some families as the *only* destination in the world that seemed open to their family members.

In recent years, out-migration from Peru has decreased because young people have been able to find jobs in improving domestic markets, including tourism and mining. However, during my fieldwork, nearly every working-age Peruvian I spoke to in Korea and Peru felt that migrating *anywhere* outside of Peru was preferable to staying home. When I asked migrants in Korea why they did not want to return to Peru, they told me it was because there were no jobs.

“*No hay nada en Perú,*” they said. “There is nothing for me in Peru.”

There was a widespread belief—confirmed by economic data—that leaving Peru was the best way for people to achieve both geographic and social mobility. Leaving Peru literally allowed people and their families to *salir adelante* (leave to get ahead).³³

In Peru, migrating abroad was a regular part of everyday conversations that I had with friends, at the local store, or overheard from strangers on the street. There were many factors that went into choosing the correct migration destination, including economics, family connections, and knowledge of risk. In 2007 I visited Señora Wilma, the aunt of one of my friends from the Catholic Church in Korea. We sat in the airy second-floor living room of the house her niece had built in a pueblo joven. When I asked Señora Wilma if many people in the area had migrated to South Korea, she shook her head *no* and then listed the many other places that people in the neighborhood had gone: Chile, Argentina, Italy, the United States. Although she had not migrated herself, she seemed to set herself apart as being more knowledgeable about the risks of migration than her neighbors, most of whom appeared to be poor.

“You have to realize all these destinations aren’t the same,” she told me. Her friend had migrated to Argentina to take a domestic labor job. “She was shocked that she couldn’t really save or send anything from Argentina,” she said. “And a friend of mine sent her son to Mexico and paid \$6,000 to cross [the Mexico–United States border]. She didn’t hear from him for twenty days! They crossed with nothing but a cell phone. She was terrified for him the whole time,” she said. “No, I would never send my child to the United States that way.”

Most people from this area would not qualify for a US tourist visa. However, like Señora Wilma, no one I met during my fieldwork ever told me they or their family members had considered crossing surreptitiously into the United States. They were very familiar with the dangers of crossing the Mexico border and had heard stories of the rising deaths on the border, especially from South American migrants.³⁴ The relative safety of entering Korea as a tourist versus risking a clandestine border crossing was one reason they had chosen Korea as a destination. However, for the Peruvians I interviewed, Korea emerged as a destination because of its proximity to Japan.

“MY UNCLE CALLED AND SAID, ‘LET’S GO TO JAPAN!’
THAT’S HOW I CAME TO KOREA.”

Between the 1990s and first decade of the 2000s, Korea changed from being a stand-in destination for Japan to a desirable destination of its own. A few migrants told me they first heard about South Korea when they saw it on TV during the 1988 Olympics, but they did not think of traveling there until after Peru established a “return migration” agreement with Japan. Organized in 1990 by then-president Alberto Fujimori, himself the son of Japanese immigrants, the “return migration” agreement allowed ethnically Japanese Peruvians to get jobs in Japan.³⁵ In the first three years of the program, 30,000 Peruvians, or an estimated 38 percent of Peru’s 80,000-member Japanese Peruvian community, had gone to Japan.³⁶ The majority of Peruvians who applied for this visa and traveled to Japan were third-generation *Sansei*, many of whom did not speak Japanese. Particularly at the beginning of the return migration program, the ambiguity about who Japanese Peruvians were created the opportunity for Peruvians who were not of Japanese descent to enter as well. This resulted in people who were not ethnically Japanese, but wanted to migrate, to either travel to Japan or try to get as close as they could. “Japan was like the United States. It was the promise of opportunity,” a man who had been in Japan before South Korea told me.

In 2008 in Norte Chico, I talked with Esteban, a man I had first met in Friendship Ministry years prior. When I asked him how he had first decided to go to Korea, he told me that he had ended up there by chance in the mid-1990s. He said, “My uncle called and said, ‘Let’s go to Japan!’ That’s how I got to Korea.” Esteban went on to explain that in the end his uncle decided to stay in Peru, so Esteban went alone. To prove that he was a real tourist, he decided to spend a week in Thailand before flying to Japan. In Thailand, he heard about Korea from other foreigners and decided to go there instead. He ended up finding a job and never made it to Japan.

In some extreme cases, like that of Juan, a forty-year-old man I met in Norte Chico, migrants actually thought they *were* going to Japan when they arrived in Korea. Juan, who many people told me was one of the first Peruvians in Korea, had paid a broker to take him to Japan. But when they arrived at Seoul’s Gimpo Airport, which he thought was going to be just a transfer point, the broker pointed out across the East Sea and said, “There’s Japan, right over there.”

After working in Korea for a few years, Juan did eventually save enough to get to Japan. Before he left Korea, he had helped to finance the trips of many of his nephews, friends, and neighbors. They all came to Korea to join him in his factory. This contributed to the growth of the community—and a concentration of Peruvians from Norte Chico.

By the 2000s, information about Korea as a destination had spread, particularly in Norte Chico and some pueblos jóvenes. Most people learned about Korea

from family members who were already there, but others learned about it serendipitously, from taxi drivers in Peru. In addition to being able to enter as tourists, there were also other benefits that made Korea desirable. Since most workers lived at their factories, which provided housing, some food, and even gas for cooking, the salary was liquid. That meant migrants could send home almost all of their earnings. Also, unlike other destinations where the employment demand is for males only, Korean factories employed women too. However, according to my interviewees, men made between one and 1.2 million won per month, while women made between 800,000 and one million won. Both male and female Peruvian migrants told me this pay discrepancy was reflective of what they saw as rampant sexism in Korea. They thought Peruvian culture was sexist too, but they held Korea up to higher standards because they saw it as being more developed than Peru. One woman I knew told me she did the exact same work as her boyfriend, who was employed at the same factory, but was annoyed to be paid 200,000 won less per month.

“THERE WAS NO HERMANA PILAR IN JAPAN”:
KOREAN CHURCHES AND MIGRANTS

Another reason that South Korea became a desirable destination of its own was because of the strong presence of Christian churches—both Catholic and Protestant—and their growing interactions with migrant laborers. Peruvians who had worked in both countries told me that the special attention and help they received from the Catholic and Protestant clergy in South Korea actually made it a better destination than Japan. When I asked Lily, a woman from a *pueblo joven*, to compare her experiences working in both Japan and South Korea, she said simply, “There was no *Hermana Pilar* in Japan.” In other words, when she was in Japan, she was on her own, but in Korea, although she was undocumented, she had a clear source of strong spiritual and institutional support. I cannot say if people migrated to Korea specifically for the attention they received from these churches, but it would be impossible to separate the churches’ presence from the experience of being a Peruvian migrant in Korea.

Unlike other key labor destinations in Asia, like Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, Korea has one of the largest Christian populations in Asia—estimated at 20 percent of the population.³⁷ The Catholic Church in Korea had a long history of working with, first, Korean labor activists and then with migrant workers. A sit-in on the steps of Myongdong Cathedral where industrial trainees from Nepal chained themselves together and camped out for weeks in 1995 to bring attention to the abusive conditions in their factories became a flashpoint for migrant rights in Korea. The protest promoted a narrative of migrant suffering and response of shame from Korean people,³⁸ but it also highlighted the significance of the Catholic Church as a central player in the struggle for migrant rights in Korea.

In the 2000s, Korean Protestant churches became more involved with migrants as a way to provide relief in terms of physical needs, but also to give them spiritual salvation. Proselytizing to foreign migrant workers and inviting them to join Korean and mission churches became a way for Korean churches to spread beyond the local Korean population—which had become saturated with churches. In addition to thousands of local churches, Korea is believed to be home to five out of ten of the world's largest Protestant megachurches—citing membership in the hundreds of thousands. Pastor Sarah, who founded Friendship Ministry, told me that nearly all of the large churches in Seoul claimed to be the largest in Korea, and perhaps the world. Korean churches began turning their attentions to overseas missions. Korea is only second to the United States in the number of missionaries abroad, and as of 2013 there were 19,798 Korean missionaries in over 167 different countries.³⁹ Many of these Protestant churches have transnational ties, due to early contact with American missionaries⁴⁰ and then to immigration of Koreans to the United States and the establishment of sister churches and their own overseas missions.

Foreign migrant workers provided a chance for churches to do “foreign missions” domestically. In her research on short-term Korean missions, geographer Ju Hui Judy Han notes that many missionaries regarded proselytizing to foreign areas “unreached” by Christianity as being equivalent to providing food or clothing.⁴¹ This was because the missionaries considered their work with migrants to be what Han calls “an assemblage of neoliberal capitalism and the Protestant ethos of perpetual self-improvement . . . articulated with a distinctly Korean model of authoritarian developmentalism.”⁴² That model promised that if people accepted spiritual salvation, they would also be on track toward personal and national economic prosperity. This was a narrative that Peruvian migrants—coming from a country reeling from economic instability and trying to survive the global financial crisis—responded to enthusiastically. Migrants I worked with were also excited to be part of launching a mission to Peru and being the ones who would bring positive change to their country. This potential for changing the world, starting with themselves and their country, was the thing that seemed to draw Peruvians to their evangelical churches, more than any promise of free food or clothing.

CREATING TRANSNATIONAL SPACES IN KOREA

The real value of Korea as a destination emerged as Peruvian migrants continued to establish a community there, joining churches, forging relationships with others, and making their mark on the space.

Dongducheon was one of the only places in Korea where I could spot visible, concentrated signs that Peruvians had made a mark on the space. Someone had literally tagged “Peru” on the walls of the abandoned school where migrant workers held soccer tournaments. At one point there were at least four Peruvian

restaurants and two Latin nightclubs owned and operated by migrants and located within one square mile of one another. On the weekends, the restaurants were spilling over with Peruvians who were drinking beer, eating plates of *lomo saltado*, and waiting to play soccer. There were also lots of parties: engagement parties, weddings, christenings, and birthday celebrations. On the weekends, people went out to share meals of Korean BBQ or large pots of *kamchatang* (potato stew) with their coworkers and friends.

Although I did the majority of my fieldwork in Korea in Seoul and semirural areas outside of Seoul (like the place where Victor and Beatriz lived), Dongducheon had an important symbolic presence for me and the people I interviewed. Rather than being the subject or backdrop of my ethnography, Dongducheon represents a salient global space in people's stories and memories of their time as migrants in Korea. It was often their starting point—the first place they lived or hung out when they arrived, the place they sinned and decided to convert, or the place they missed when they were deported.

Peruvians I knew were simultaneously scandalized by, attracted to, and scared of the fast life in Dongducheon. One Sunday afternoon two sisters from Norte Chico invited me to a popular Peruvian restaurant. They were so embarrassed by the men drinking and singing boisterously to the salsa music playing on the TVs above the booths that the three of us left before we had even ordered. Whenever Peruvians told me stories of migrants breaking up their marriages by cheating on spouses with Koreans, foreigners, or other Peruvians, Dongducheon was frequently the backdrop of the romance. Cristianos from Nazarene called it *el campo* (the field) and treated it a little like a foreign mission. They would borrow a van from their church in Seoul, load it up with Peruvians training to be evangelists, and make the two-hour drive out to visit people after work in their factories. Yet, whenever I interviewed former migrants in Peru and asked them what they missed about Korea, they almost always mentioned the experience of being in a place like Dongducheon and having friends from all over the world. That feeling of being part of an international community was something they could not find in Peru. Thus, although Dongducheon was not central to my fieldwork, it is significant to the story of Peruvian migration to Korea.

TRANSFORMING PERU

As Peruvians created their worlds in Korea, they simultaneously transformed their sending communities in Peru. As a result of chain migration and word of mouth, Norte Chico became a large sending destination for migrants to Japan and then to Korea. A man in Korea told me that when he arrived at the cabinet factory where his cousin had found him a job, he was surprised to see numerous people from his Norte Chico neighborhood already working there. He even met a classmate from his middle school in that factory.

There were few acutely visible marks of Korean migration in that space, however. In contrast, I frequently stumbled across signs of Japanese migration such as statues, commemorative bridges, and foundations in Norte Chico and Lima. It caught my eye one day then, when I crossed the Plaza de Armas in Norte Chico and saw a parked moped with a sign attached on the back advertising, in Hangul, a Korean pizza place. It still had the Korean license plate on it. Shipping used taxis and other vehicles from Korea was a common way that migrants earned money on the side. I guessed this moped must have been brought over or sent by a migrant in Korea, but I never got a chance to meet the owner. There were other signs of Korea in Norte Chico though, including businesses run by former migrants or the families of migrants still in Korea. I spent time with migrant families in their stores that sold things like party supplies and electronics sent from Korea.

One evening in Norte Chico I went out for coffee and cake with the woman I was staying with and her granddaughters. Although the town had a laid-back beach-town vibe, the Plaza de Armas and nearby marketplace were bustling. It was already 8:30 p.m., but lots of people were shopping in the stores, hanging out on the benches in the town square, and moving around in moto-taxis (motorcycles outfitted with a covered trailer that held the driver and two passengers). Cumbia hits from the Peruvian groups *Hermanos Yaipén* and *Grupo 5* blasted from the *cabinas de internet* (internet cafés) and *chifas* (Chinese restaurants) on almost every street.

Since migration was so common in Norte Chico, some of the space of the central area was organized around that project. An example was *locutorios*, storefronts that were filled with phone booths where one could place local or international calls. There were several locutorios on both sides of nearly every street, and some of them were combined with internet cafés. The locutorios had colorful signs posted out front advertising how much it was to call places that had communities of people from Norte Chico: including Paterson, New Jersey, and Japan. I occasionally saw ones that advertised the rate to call South Korea.

The granddaughters were surprised that I was interested in these locutorios, which were commonplace to them. “Are these set up to call people abroad?” I asked.

“They are to call anyone, I guess,” one told me. Cell phones and calls were very expensive in Peru. Eventually I started using the locutorios to call my family and arrange interviews in Peru when my cell phone ran out of credit—something that always seemed to happen at the worst time. I also accompanied families to the locutorio a few times and waited outside while they chatted with their family members who lived abroad.

In contrast to Norte Chico, the connection to Korea was more scattered in the pueblos jóvenes. People came from different areas and, besides from a few families who migrated together, had not known each other before migrating. Lima has many pueblos jóvenes, which had started out as squatter communities to



FIGURE 2. Taxi in a *pueblo joven*: A symbol of migration. Photo by author.

accommodate internal migrants coming from rural areas in Peru in the 1970s and were still struggling to improve their infrastructures. Some of the *pueblos jóvenes* still had dirt roads and provisional water and electricity connections, but others were developing quickly.⁴³ On each subsequent trip, I saw that the infrastructure had improved, with things like newly constructed traffic signals, parks, and sidewalks. The individual homes changed every time I visited too, with migrants having sent remittances in the form of cash to construct second floors or items such as electronics and clothes.

In all of my field sites in Peru, the impact of migration to Korea was more visible within the family homes than anywhere else because pursuing the opportunities of migration, as well as taking on the risks, was a family project. Of the nine families I spent significant amounts of time with in Peru, all of them had at least two immediate family members in different countries: primarily Japan, Argentina, Chile, or Bolivia. Most often their family migration history mapped on to larger migration trends in Peru; they often had a parent or older sibling who had been in Japan since the early 1990s. Many had worked in Japan or the United States

themselves prior to migrating to Korea. Migrants also routinely had to leave young children in the care of their grandparents not knowing when they would return. To gather the money for the migrant to travel, family members had done things like borrow from family members already abroad or take out loans against the family home. Taxis were also a significant symbol of family migration projects. I met a few people who had sold their family taxis to finance migrations, but more hoped to buy taxis with their remittances and turn them into a sustainable source of income for the family long after the migration had ended.

CONCLUSION

The migration of Peruvians to Korea developed during a time of drastic changes in Peru's and Korea's political economies. Peruvian migrants were just one group of many to find jobs in Korea, and Korea was just one destination for Peruvian migrants. Yet, I have shown how through their actions of migrating and participating in life in Korea and Peru, they created and elucidated transnational ties between the two countries as well as changed the significance and value of Korea in Peru.

While Korea most likely never entered the ranking of desirable destinations for Peruvians in general, at one point during the mid-2000s some families in Norte Chico saw it as the only destination in the world open to them. They could arrive by plane with a temporary visa and find a familiar community of Peruvians and the possibility of joining new communities of foreigners. Over the period of twenty years, the meaning of Korea changed from being a stand-in for Japan to a desirable destination all its own. This value change happened through interactions with others, as migrants created meaningful spaces and relationships in Korea and then sent remittances to their families in Peru. These connections happened through word of mouth and within family networks, resulting in chain migration primarily from Norte Chico, but also from some pueblos jóvenes in Lima and other cities outside of Lima.

By showing the differences and parallels between the experiences of Victor and Beatriz, two Peruvians who arrived in Korea in the same year and lived in the same area, I hoped to demonstrate that the lives of migrants were affected by the ways in which their plans converged with the cosmopolitan conversion plans of the Korean state and churches. Their lives were constantly changing partly because they were there helping to create the Peruvian community in Korea and continued to participate in their communities in Peru. Despite the obvious differences of Beatriz being documented and a wife and mother in a Korean family, both of their daily lives involved negotiating between constantly changing levels of freedom and fear, inclusion and exclusion, under multiple forms of surveillance. Neighbors judged Beatriz as they also included her in their daily lives. She was treated as being both different from, and a member of, her community. Similarly, Victor was

able to remain in Korea because of the invisibility his house and factory provided. While his movements were restricted, he saw them in context with the levels of freedom he used to enjoy as he helped to create and establish the Peruvian community in his area.

Although the effects of these conversions and transnational ties are sometimes difficult to spot, they made a big impact on migrants and their communities. It was visible in their homes and the ways they saw their relative places in the world—especially when viewed in comparison with how their neighbors lived. Similarly, in Korea, the spaces that emerged as symbolically “Korean” were also those most affected by Peruvians who dared to create their communities out in the open—such as in Dongducheon. However, even those impacts were fleeting and only came into relief in other areas where Peruvians made their worlds within the safety of their homes or churches for fear of being spotted by immigration officers and detained. In the chapter that follows, I explore how the multiple worlds that people like Beatriz and Victor occupy and create in and between South Korea and Peru converge and clash through the medium of the global financial crisis and unstable remittances.