

GUIDE TO KOREA

FOR OVERSEAS ADOPTED KOREANS
국외입양동포자료집



OVERSEAS KOREANS FOUNDATION

재외동포재단

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THE OVERSEAS KOREANS FOUNDATION (OKF)

INTRODUCTION

OKF IS

The Overseas Korean Foundation is a non-profit organization affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The basic mission of OKF is to further the rights and interests of overseas Koreans and to deepen our ethnic bond.

Its establishment was on the basis of the announcement of the "Overseas Koreans Foundation Legislation" (Law No. 5313) passed on March 27, 1997. Then on October 30 of that year, the Foundation was inaugurated and put into official operation.

The Foundation strives to create Hanminjok culture and promote exchange between Koreans in the homeland and overseas by carrying out surveys & research, exchange, education, cultural affairs, and information system operation programs.

BASIC PROGRAMS OF OKF

1. Planning and Research Bureau

- Planning, Regulations, General affairs, Personnel affairs, Financial affairs, Budget
- Survey of Overseas Korean Communities
- A Research Foundation for Overseas Koreans
- Operation of the Resource Center

2. Department of International Exchanges

- Exchange Programs among Overseas Korean Communities and Promotion Programs for the Rights and Interests of Overseas Korean Communities
- Programs for Establishing Hanminjok Community

- Support for Overseas Immigration Commemoration Projects
- Invitational Education and Support Programs for Adopted Koreans Overseas
(Website : oaks.hanminjok.net)

3. Department of Economic Affairs

- Operation of the Hansang Network (www.hansang.net)
- Economic Exchange Support Programs for Overseas Koreans
- Vocational Training Programs

4. Department of Education

- Support for Korean Language and Ethnic Education
- Scholarship Programs for Overseas Koreans
- Invitational Educational Training Programs for Overseas Koreans
- Development and Operation of Cyber Korean Language Course (www.teenkorean.net)

5. Department of Cultural Affairs

- The Hanminjok Cultural Festival
- Dispatching of Cultural and Performing Arts Teams
- Art and Culture Support Programs for Overseas Koreans
- Operation of a Cultural and Art Site For Overseas Koreans (culture.korean.net)

6. Department of Information Technology

- Operation of www.korean.net
- Construction of Information Systems for Overseas Korean Communities
- Support Programs for Overseas Korean Media
- Public Relations Programs

SUPPORT OVERSEAS ADOPTED KOREANS

SUMMER CULTURAL PROGRAM

Website : oaks.hanminjok.net/sub2_2.htm

The Overseas Koreans Foundation (OKF) is pleased to invite Korean adoptees residing abroad to the Summer Cultural Program. As you may be aware, more than 200,000 Korean children have been sent overseas for adoption during the past several decades. As those children have become adults, a great number of them have been visiting Korea to search for birth family, to see Korean society, and to gain valuable experiences living in Korea. Although the reasons for visiting Korea may be diverse, OKF supports all adoptees in building self-esteem and encourages them to acquire a solid understanding of their motherland. For those reasons, we have been hosting a Summer Cultural Program for adoptees since 1998. The program focuses on Korean culture, history, customs, and language; but these are not the only things the program offers. A great number of opportunities during the program will help adoptees learn about their motherland, enhance awareness of adoption issues, and build bridges among Korean adoptees across the continents. We promise a terrific summer program with sightseeing and fun times, as well as priceless memories to take back home with you.

SUPPORT OF OVERSEAS ADOPTED KOREAN ORGANIZATIONS

Website : oaks.hanminjok.net/sub1.htm

Through a selection process, the Overseas Koreans Foundation (OKF) will provide financial support to selected projects with the potential to strengthen our bilateral relationships. It is currently working with overseas adopted Korean organizations and adoptive parents' networks. Written expression of interest should be submitted for projects in the following areas.

- 1) Activities that promote the maintenance of Korean identity for overseas Korean adoptees. (Korean traditional cultural programs, camps for learning about Korea, searching for roots)
- 2) Sharing information with other Korean adoptee organizations and construction of networks through conferences, workshops and forums.
- 3) Programs that promote strengthening of ties with Korea and the overseas Koreans Foundation.

※ If there are requests for programs to visit Korea, we will ask you to participate in our Summer Cultural Program.

SUPPORT OF POST ADOPTION SERVICES

Website : oaks.hanminjok.net/sub1_2.htm

OBJECTIVES

A plan for overseas adopted Koreans and adoptive families to properly understand adoptees' birth country. We support adoption agencies' post-adoption services (birth country visits, Korean language study, mediating reunions between overseas adopted Koreans and their birth families), and the promotion of a sense of Korean identity for overseas Koreans.

SUPPORTING AGENCIES

1.HOLT(Holt Children's Services Inc)

Website : www.holt.or.kr/holt1/main8/main.htm

Email : holtkorea@hotmail.com

2.ESWS (Eastern Social Welfare Society) :

Website : www.eastern.or.kr/eng/htm/home.htm

Email : postadoption@eastern.or.kr

3.SWS (Social Welfare Society)

Website : www.alovenest.com/eng/english.htm

Email : swspas@sws.or.kr

4.KSS (Korean Social Service)

Website : www.kssinc.org

Email : kssinc@kssinc.org

Tel : 82-2-908-9191~3, Fax : 82-2-908-3344

CONTACT INFORMATION **Overseas Koreans Foundation**

Tel : 82-2-3463-6500(ext : 304)

Fax : 82-2-3463-3999

Contact : Jeannie Hong

Website : oaks.hanminjok.net

E m a i l : hongjh@okf.or.kr

Address : 6th Floor, Diplomatic Center
1376-1 Seocho-2 Dong,
Seocho-Gu, Seoul, 137-072,
Korea

PART I

50 YEARS OF KOREAN ADOPTION

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

TOBIAS HÜBINETTE

Official statistics from the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare record 151,697 international adoptions having taken place between 1953-2002. 150,000 children adopted overseas is also the number most agreed upon in Korea, although some organizations such as Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice and Global Overseas Adoptees' Link mention as many as 200,000, including unaccounted private adoptions.

Of these, 100,858 are American cases, constituting one-third of all international adoptions in the U.S., and ten percent of the Korean-American population. International adoption (54 percent) together with international marriage (36 percent) actually dominated emigration from Korea to the U.S. between 1950-59, and as the number of Koreans emigrating has decreased substantially during recent years, the 2,000 Korean children who are brought to the country annually today again represent more than half of all immigrants from Korea (Yoon In-jin, 2001).

The 46,231 adopted Koreans in Europe—in the countries of France, Germany, Switzerland, England, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway and Denmark—again represent one out of three of all international adoptees on the continent.

France leads, with 10,989 adopted Koreans, and altogether 8,231 have been placed in Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg. Half, or 23,094, can be found in the three Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Norway and Denmark. In Scandinavia, this group constitutes half (Denmark and Norway) to one fifth (Sweden) of all international adoptees, besides being the largest East Asian minority in these countries, and totally dominates the ethnic Korean presence in region as there are very few Korean immigrants living there (Hubinette, 2003a).

Sweden, with its 45,000 international adoptees from over 130 different countries, is, proportionally speaking, the biggest adoption country in the world and in absolute numbers the second after United States. In the U.S., Scandinavian-Americans are remarkably prevalent in international adoption as well, and naturally, also in adoption from Korea. An estimated 10-15 percent of the adopted Koreans in the U.S. have been placed in the very Scandinavian state of Minnesota where the group constitutes more than half of all ethnic Koreans (Drenning Holmquist, 1981 : 572-579).

Lastly, there are 5,131 adopted Koreans spread out in Canada, Australia and New Zealand,

where they again make up a substantial part of the international adoptees in those countries. There are altogether less than a hundred adopted Koreans in Ireland, Finland and Spain, plus those who have ended up in Greenland, Iceland or the Faeroe Islands by the way of Danish adoption agencies.

The odd countries of India, China, Hong Kong, Ethiopia, Guam, Paraguay, Poland, Tunisia, Turkey and the mysterious Buland turning up in the statistics are most probably explained by Western adoptive parents living there as expatriates.¹⁾ With the background of Korea's highly negative experience with Japanese colonialism, it is highly surprising to say the least that 320 Korean children were sent for adoption to Japan and Okinawa between 1964-84, although it is impossible to say how many of the adoptive parents who were Japanese nationals or American military servicemen and diplomatic personnel stationed there.

¹ The still unidentified Buland may be a misspelling for Poland, while China in reality means Taiwan.

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS FROM KOREA, BY DECADE, 1953-2002

Year	No.	Year	No.	Year	No.	Year	No.	Year	No.	Year	No.
		1960	638	1970	1,932	1980	4,144	1990	2,962	2000	2,360
		1961	660	1971	2,725	1981	4,628	1991	2,197	2001	2,436
		1962	254	1972	3,490	1982	6,434	1992	2,045	2002	2,365
1953	4	1963	442	1973	4,688	1983	7,263	1993	2,290		
1954	8	1964	462	1974	5,302	1984	7,924	1994	2,262		
1955	59	1965	451	1975	5,077	1985	8,837	1995	2,180		
1956	671	1966	494	1976	6,597	1986	8,680	1996	2,080		
1957	486	1967	626	1977	6,159	1987	7,947	1997	2,057		
1958	930	1968	949	1978	5,917	1988	6,463	1998	2,443		
1959	741	1969	1,190	1979	4,148	1989	4,191	1999	2,409		
Total	2,899		6,166		46,035		66,511		22,925		151,697

Source : Ministry of Health and Welfare

TABLE 2

DESTINATION BY COUNTRY, 1953-2002

Main countries 1953-2002	Number	Other countries 1960-1984	Number
United States 1953-2002	100,858	New Zealand 1964-84	559
France 1968-2002	10,989	Japan 1962-82	226
Sweden 1957-2002	8,720	Okinawa 1970-72	94
Denmark 1965-2002	8,462	Buland 1970	47
Norway 1955-2002	5,912	Ireland 1968-75	12
Netherlands 1969-2002	4,091	Poland 1970	7
Belgium 1969-95	3,697	Spain 1968	5
Australia 1969-2002	2,931	China 1967-68	4
Germany 1965-96	2,352	Guam 1971-72	3
Canada 1967-2002	1,641	India 1960-64	3
Switzerland 1968-97	1,111	Paraguay 1969	2
Luxembourg 1984-2002	443	Ethiopia 1961	1
Italy 1965-81	382	Finland 1984	1
England 1958-81	72	Hong Kong 1973	1
Other countries 1956-95	66	Tunisia 1969	1
		Turkey 1969	1
Total	151,727		967

Source : Ministry of Health and Welfare

TABLE 3

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND CATEGORY OF ADOPTED KOREANS, 1958-2002

Years	Abandoned	Split family	Single mother	Total
1958-60	1,675	630	227	2,532
1961-70	4,013	1,958	1,304	7,275
1971-80	17,260	13,360	17,627	48,247
1981-90	6,769	11,399	47,153	65,321
1991-2000	225	1,444	20,460	22,129
2001	1	1	2,434	2,436
2002				2,365
Total	29,943	28,792	89,205	150,305

Years	Male	Mixed	Handicapped	Total
1958-60	734	1,159	1,588	2,532
1961-70	2,254	2,659	2,064	7,275
1971-80	17,320	n.a.	4,598	48,247
1981-90	30,460	n.a.	16,378	65,321
1991-2000	12,009	n.a.	8,987	22,129
2001	1,364	n.a.	743	2,436
2002	1,369	n.a.	827	2,365
Total	65,510	3,818	35,185	150,305

Source : Ministry of Health and Welfare

TABLE 4**INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS BY GENDER, ETHNICITY, AND DISABILITY, 1953-2001**

Year	Number	Male	Mixed	Disability
1953	4			
1954	8			
1955	59		52	
1956	671		618	
1957	486		411	
1958	930		623	
1959	741		291	
1960	638		245	
1961	660		361	
1962	254		158	
1963	442		196	
1964	462		232	
1965	451		201	
1966	494		249	
1967	626		276	
1968	949		317	
1969	1,190		308	
1970	1,932		361	
1971	2,725		281	
1972	3,490		212	
1973	4,688		154	
1974	5,302			
1975	5,077			
1976	6,597			
1977	6,519			
1978	5,917			
1979	4,148			
1980	4,144			
1981	4,628			
1982	6,434			
1983	7,263			
1984	7,924			
1985	8,837			
1986	8,680	4,044		2,527
1987	7,947	3,874		2,354
1988	6,463	3,199		1,821
1989	4,191	1,970		1,486
1990	2,962	1,460		1,132
1991	2,197	1,007		991
1992	2,045	1,018		837
1993	2,290	1,161		1,032
1994	2,262	1,135		987
1995	2,180	1,180		1,045
1996	2,080	1,180		935
1997	2,057	1,124		784
1998	2,443	1,408		917
1999	2,409	1,374		825
2000	2,360	1,422		634
2001	2,436	1,364		743
2002	2,365	1,379		827
2003	2,287	1,367		649

Total 1953-2001 : 149 332

Source : Ministry of Health and Welfare

TABLE 5

OVERSEAS AND DOMESTIC ADOPTION IN KOREA, 1939-2003

Year	International	Domestic	Institution	Abandonment
1939-61		4,491		
1940			1,717	
1945			3,000	
1947			6,881	
1950			24,945	
1958-60		168		
1953	4			
1954	8			
1955	59		45,260	715
1956	671		46,481	1,425
1957	486		48,594	2,506
1958	930		51,630	2,113
1959	741		53,016	2,415
1960	638		56,042	2,537
1961	660		55,383	4,453
1962	254	833	51,815	4,646
1963	442	849	56,494	8,207
1964	462	918	61,963	11,319
1965	451	903	69,487	7,866
1966	494	943	71,709	7,284
1967	626	1,011	71,816	6,526
1968	949	1,237	66,211	5,976
1969	1,190	1,553	61,380	5,743
1970	1,932	1,724	58,281	5,788
1971	2,725	1,732	54,047	5,525
1972	3,490	2,151	47,657	6,211
1973	4,688	3,072	43,528	5,941
1974	5,302	1,069	43,071	5,935
1975	5,077	1,877	42,215	7,347
1976	6,597	1,386	39,844	6,631
1977	6,159	3,079	37,724	7,115
1978	5,917	3,522	35,207	6,239
1979	4,148	3,660	33,541	7,763
1980	4,144	3,657	33,098	8,250
1981	4,628	3,267	33,706	9,117
1982	6,434	3,298	33,770	11,585
1983	7,263 (7,255)	3,004	33,301	12,114
1984	7,924	3,000	33,796	13,430
1985	8,837	2,885	25,424	14,230
1986	8,680	2,854	---	13,887
1987	7,947	2,382	26,422	13,304
1988	6,463	2,324	27,384	9,136
1989	4,191	1,872	25,424	
1990	2,962	1,647	23,450	
1991	2,197	1,241	22,327	
1992	2,045	1,190	21,293	
1993	2,290	1,154	20,194	
1994	2,262	1,207	19,214	
1995	2,180	1,025	18,074	
1996	2,080	1,229	17,432	
1997	2,057	1,142	16,936	

1998	2,443 (2,249)	1,426	17,820
1999	2,409	1,726	17,840
2000	2,360	1,686	17,720
2001	2,436	1,770	18,808
2002	2,365	1,649	---
2003	2,287	1,564	18,818

Overseas adoptees 1958-2003 : 153,386

Source : Ministry of Health and Welfare

Domestic adoptees 1958-2003 : 64,505

TABLE 6

DOMESTIC AND OVERSEAS ADOPTION BY SEX OF ADOPTEE, 1995-2003

Year	Domestic Adoptions				Overseas Adoptions			
	Applications	Actual	Percentage	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
2003	1,931	1,564	80.90%	543	1,021	2,287	1,367	920
2002	2,104	1,694	80.50%	632	1,062	2,365	1,379	986
2001	2,329	1,770	75.90%	743	1,027	2,436	1,364	1,072
2000	2,397	1,686	70.30%	715	971	2,360	1,422	938
1999	2,492	1,726	69.30%	714	1,012	2,409	1,374	1,035
1998	2,289	1,426	62.30%	634	792	2,443	1,408	1,035
1997	2,400	1,412	58.80%	616	796	2,057	1,124	933
1996	2,453	1,229	50.10%	538	691	2,080	1,180	900
1995	2,000	1,025	51.30%	426	599	2,180	1,180	1,000

TABLE 7

CIRCUMSTANCES OF ADOPTION, 1995-2003

Year	Domestic Adoptions					Overseas Adoptions				
	Reason for Relinquishment			Condition of Child		Reason for Relinquishment			Condition of Child	
	Unwed Mother	Institution	Poverty	Normal	Disabled*	Unwed Mother	Abandoned	Poverty	Normal	Disabled*
2003	1,181	210	173	1,544	20	2,283	2	2	1,638	649
2002	1,344	203	60	1,678	16	2,364	1	--	1,538	827
2001	1,428	221	131	1,756	14	2,434	1	1	1,693	743
2000	1,350	234	102	1,668	18	2,356	2	2	1,726	634
1999	1,369	199	158	1,712	14	2,253	5	151	1,584	825
1998	1,067	287	72	1,420	6	2,271	9	163	1,526	917
1997	1,064	258	90	1,400	12	2,018	8	31	1,273	784
1996	906	271	52	1,212	17	1,916	26	138	1,145	935
1995	680	297	48	997	28	2,019	21	140	1,135	1,045

*includes premature infants

Source : Source : Ministry of Health and Welfare

TABLE 8

ADULT ADOPTEES VISITING ADOPTION AGENCIES, 1993-2001

Year	No.
1993	1,236
1994	1,374
1995	1,283
1996	1,837
1997	1,857
1998	1,971
1999	2,124
2000	2,629
2001	2,760

Source : Ministry of Health and Welfare

ADOPTION IN KOREA, THEN AND NOW

ELEANA KIM

The adoption of South Korean children into Western families has been ongoing since the end of the Korean War (1950-1953). Since then, more than 200,000 children have been sent overseas for adoption, with more than half adopted to the United States, and the rest to Western Europe, Canada, and Australia. South Korea's foreign adoption program is the longest running program in the world, and is also a source of continual political controversy and public debate. The following presents a brief overview of the history of adoption from Korea and addresses some of the cultural and social factors that are related to the adoption issue.

ADOPTION IN KOREAN HISTORY

It is often said that one reason children from Korea need to be adopted by families in foreign countries is because there is no tradition of adoption in Korean culture. This is, in fact, only partially true. In his book *Korean Adoption and Inheritance* (Cornell University 1983), anthropologist Mark Peterson argues that adoption in pre-modern Korea was historically linked to the problem of family inheritance and continuity of the bloodline. Since the Confucian transformation of Korean society in the 17th century, adoption has been a solution for ensuring the continuation of the father's bloodline in the case of infertility or the inability to have sons.

In the 17th century, the ruling class (yangban) adopted an orthodox form of Confucianism from China, and instituted the Confucian Clan Code as a state ideology. This code excluded women from inheritance and thus drastically reduced their social status, whereas it gave men, especially first-sons, exclusive control over politics, property, and the family. A woman's value under this system was directly related to her ability to produce sons for her husband's family, in order to ensure the continuity of the patrilineal bloodline. With this transformation to neo-Confucianism, males became the exclusive heirs to family property and were the only ones permitted to perform ancestral rites. According to this code, only male relatives of a younger generation could be adopted from the patriline, usually between the ages of 20 and 30, so that they could inherit property and uphold the tradition of ancestor worship. After the yangban class instituted this conservative system, it gradually

spread through Korean society, becoming the ideal model for family and social organization.

Before this conservative transformation of Korean society, however, women and men had equal rights to inheritance and women's family genealogy was as important as men's. There is evidence that until the 17th century, unrelated abandoned children were often adopted, as well as children related through the wife's family. In addition, widows and unmarried women also adopted children. Despite this evidence of Korean adoption practices that share similarities to contemporary Western adoption, Mark Peterson in 1977 reported that Koreans understood adoption only in neo-Confucian terms, and that they found the American adoption of non-relatives to be "incomprehensible."

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

The international adoption of South Korean children first began as a humanitarian response to the needs of thousands of children who were orphaned or separated from their families as a result of the Korean War. Many of these children, born to Korean women and fathered by American and European servicemen, were stigmatized because of their racial difference and illegitimate backgrounds. Immediately following the war, the South Korean government established Child Placement Service in 1954, and the following year, Harry Holt, an evangelical Christian from Oregon, responded to the plight of the mixed-race children by adopting eight of them. By 1956, Harry and Bertha Holt had established Holt Adoption Agency, and the Seventh Day Adventists and the Catholic Relief Service had also set up placement services for overseas adoptions. Between 1953 and 1960, around 3,500 Korean children were sent for adoption abroad; more than 90% of this first wave was of mixed-race parentage.

By the 1960s, full-Korean children began to be adopted overseas through the four government approved adoption agencies, Holt Adoption Agency, Social Welfare Society (formerly Child Placement Service), Eastern Child Welfare Society and Korea Social Service. The postwar period in Korea was one marked by massive poverty and large-scale social and economic transformations. South Korea, once a predominantly rural, agricultural economy of extended family households, became, within one generation, an urban, industrialized economy of nuclear family households. By the mid-1980s, three-quarters of the population was living in urban areas. The social implications for this transformation have been widespread. Young women from the countryside traveled alone to the

cities to find work in factories, often being exploited physically and sexually. During the 1960s and 70s, poor female factory workers relinquished their children for reasons of poverty and illegitimacy. As the Korean economy improved in the 1980s, more liberal sexual practices among young people as well as the loosening of the traditional family structure contributed to the problem of unplanned pregnancies among single college-age women. Today, the majority of babies relinquished for adoption are born to middle- or working-class unwed mothers in their teens and early 20s.

Since the 1970s, there have been attempts to reduce the numbers of adopted children, to completely stop international adoptions, and to encourage domestic adoption by Koreans. Negative press coverage by the international media during the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games focused on the adoption issue, calling South Korea's children its "greatest export." In response to this criticism, the government implemented a quota system, intending to increase domestic adoption, and to gradually reduce international adoptions by three to five percent a year, with a projected end to adoptions by 2015. From a peak of more than 8,000 children sent abroad in 1986 alone, adoptions were reduced to around 2,200 per year by the early 1990s. During the 1997-98 IMF economic crisis, however, the decline in the number of adoptions was reversed, as financial woes created desperate situations for families, and increasing rates of divorce, domestic violence and bankruptcy coincided with thousands of children being relinquished to the state. Adoptions increased by nine percent between 1997 and 1998, and since then, overseas placements have hovered above 2,000 per year. This history indicates that adoption policy and practice in South Korea are exceptionally sensitive to economic fluctuations and international opinion.

International adoption quickly became institutionalized in the early 1960s to become a population and social welfare policy that hindered the development of alternative approaches for dealing with the needs of women and children. Despite South Korea's dramatic economic and political development over the past 50 years, children continue to be born and relinquished. Imagining an end of adoption from South Korea requires finding an adequate solution for the estimated 7,000 children who are in need of state welfare intervention every year. In-country adoptions have been encouraged by the government through media campaigns and education, and domestic adoption reached a high of around 1,700 children in 1999. Still, adoption among South Koreans is still predominantly parent-centered, and physically or mentally disabled children often have no alternatives but to be placed in institutional care or adopted by families overseas. There is no easy solution to the adoption issue.

Nevertheless, understanding the factors that help perpetuate international adoption is an important first step towards finding a solution.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The status of women in Korean culture is one factor that is essential to understanding the adoption issue. After the Korean War, the new South Korean government embraced the conservative Confucian ethics of pre-modern Korean society. Although the South Korean constitution was influenced by American democratic principles and included protections for civil rights, personal liberties and the right to vote, the South Korean Family Law of 1960 effectively undermined the democratic rights of women by instituting male patriarchy as a legal fact. Despite opposition from women's groups, the new South Korean government claimed neo-Confucianism as an essential part of Korean "heritage" and indigenous values, and ignored the pre-Confucian tradition that gave greater equality and opportunity to women. The Family Law essentially adapted the ancient Confucian Clan Code into modern law.

Under the Family Law, only the eldest male member of the patrilineage was recognized as the legal head of the household. He controlled the family registry, inheritance, and the legal status of all members of the family. Children born out of wedlock, therefore, were not legally recognized unless they were included in their maternal grandfather's family registry. When a woman divorced her husband, she had no claims on the child, who was considered the father's legal property. Women's rights groups challenged the Family Law for nearly four decades, arguing for greater equality for women, but it was not until 1991 that the contradictions between the constitutional rights of women and the lack of rights afforded under the Family Law began to be addressed by the government.

Under the reformed law of 1991, it became possible for family members other than the eldest son to serve as the head of household. It also allowed husband and wife equal power in deciding issues of residence and property and prohibited age discrimination in inheritance. With this revision, women were also able to include their children on their own family registry, instead of having to petition their fathers or husbands.

These important legal changes, along with the many advances made possible by democratization, modernization, and globalization have helped improve the status of Korean women, yet many

barriers to equal rights and opportunities for women still exist. The preference for sons in South Korea is one of the strongest in the world, and is reflected in unbalanced gender ratios and higher rates of female infant mortality, although there are some signs that this preference is softening among the young urban population. Nevertheless, job discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace are still prevalent, and women's wages continue to lag behind men's. As became clear during the IMF crisis, women are the last to be hired and first to be fired during periods of economic difficulty, and it is often assumed that once a woman has children she will give up her profession.

A primary reason that couples from Western countries have turned to places like South Korea to adopt is because they are unable to adopt healthy white babies in their own countries. Cultural acceptance of single motherhood in the West, along with family support and government aid for single parents has created a situation where more than 90% of single women decide to raise their children on their own. Korean culture is very family-oriented, and the shame accompanying single motherhood is often too great for a woman to endure. For a woman without financial or emotional support from her family, social network, or from the government, to raise a child on one's own is an impossible choice. Effective sex education programs to help prevent unplanned pregnancies among young women and teenagers are key to reducing the numbers of children relinquished for adoption every year. In addition, greater financial and emotional support for single mothers, and increased openness among South Koreans to domestic adoption are vital to seeking an end to South Korea's dependence on international adoption.

KOREAN ADOPTION HISTORY

TOBIAS HÜBINETTE

International adoption, the movement of children from predominantly non-Western countries to adoptive parents in the West, was initiated on a large scale in connection with the Korean War (Benet, 1976 : 120-136). International adoption from Korea is intimately linked to the decline of traditional Korean society and the dispersal of people of Korean ethnicity from the Korean peninsula. Starting with the collapse of the Choson dynasty, and escalating during the colonial era, this dispersal reached its peak with the national division and the civil war and reached its conclusion with the rise of post-war industrialisation. All of these dramatic, and in all respects, tragic events took place within less than a century and in the course of three generations, affecting every Korean individual struggling to survive and causing extreme strain on every Korean family trying to stay together in the chaos.

The modern exodus of Korean people began in the year 1860, due to the outbreak of famine and the impoverished conditions of the northern provinces (Lee, Kwang-Kyu, 2000 : 6-13). The first wave of emigrants found their way to the Russian Far East territory (bordering present day's North Korea), and from 1869 Koreans started to pour into Chinese Manchuria in great numbers. From 1881, Korean students went over to Japan, and, in 1903, emigration to the U.S. was initiated through indentured labour. These four countries, Russia (later Soviet Union and Central Asia), China, Japan and the U.S., have since then been the most important host countries for the Korean diaspora (Back, 2001; Cui, 1990; Hurh, 1998; Lee, Kwang-Kyu, 1993; Ryang, 2001).

The colonial period, with its extreme migration patterns (see Kim and Sloboda, 1981), changed Korean society irrevocably as the country and its people were ruthlessly exploited by imperial Japan. At the time of Japanese surrender, altogether 4 million Koreans—an astonishing 16 percent of the entire population—were to be found outside the peninsula, while a total of 40 percent of the adult population had been uprooted and dislocated (Eckert et al., 1990 : 322). Altogether 266,000 Korean males were mobilised for labour service (kyosei renko) in Japan, while 320,000 were drafted as military personnel and stationed within the extensive Japanese Empire. A total of 70,000 of these men died from hardships, during war operations or as unintentional victims of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki

(Dower, 1986 : 297; Ryang, 1998; Yoneyama, 1995). In addition, tens of thousands of young girls had been forced to serve as comfort women (chongsindae) in the Japanese army of whom a minority survived and returned to Korea after the war (Kim, Hyun-Sook, 1997; Kim-Gibson, 1999; Yoshiaki, 1995).

For Koreans, 1945 would mean liberation from Japanese rule, occupation by American and Russian troops, partition along the 38th parallel, repatriation and resettlement of countrymen from the collapsing Japanese Empire, and the beginning of massive internal migration movements (Lee, Hyo-Jae, 1985). In 1948, the division was formalised by the establishment of two contending dictatorial regimes, both systematically purging its ideological opponents and causing further mass killings and floods of refugees. Lastly, the Korean War, a civil war that became an international conflict between the Cold War superpowers, resulted in something close to genocide with 3.5-4 million soldiers and civilians being killed on both sides, representing 10-15 percent of the entire ethnic Korean population (Halliday & Cumings, 1988 : 200-201; Hong, Sung-Won, 2000).

The various ways of calculating the magnitude of these movements of people between 1945-53 have been considered by Kim, Choong-Soon (1988) and James Foley (2001, 2002) in their studies of separated families, and by Shin, Eui-Hang (2001) in a paper on the effects of the war. According to Korea's leading demographer and most reliable source, Kwon, Tai-Hwan, as many as 2.6 million people ended up in South Korea during those years, eventually constituting 14 percent of the population. Of these, 1.4 million had been repatriated from every corner of the Japanese empire, and 1.2 million were refugees coming from North Korea, while 300,000 took the other direction and went to the North.

These historical events and social contexts are prerequisites to understanding international adoption from Korea. Statistics for institutionalised children given by the Church World Service social welfare consultants Charles Chakerian (1968 : 40-44) and Helen Miller (1971) are revealing. In 1945, when Japanese rule ended, there were just 38 child welfare institutions in the country inhabited by 3,000 children, while at the outbreak of the war in 1950 after repatriation and refugee movements from the North, those numbers had increased to 215 institutions and 24,945 children. Finally, in post-war Korea of 1957, five years after the armistice and the separation and destruction of numerous families, there were 482 institutions and 48,594 children living there.

The first Western-style orphanages were set up by missionaries in the late 19th century, and numerous others were established by soldiers during the war (Ch'oe, Won-Kyu, 1996; Paik Lak-Geon George, [1927] 1980). Out of 273 child welfare facilities existing in 2002, 177 were

established before 1960 and as many as 144 in the 1950s, of which the absolute majority can be attributed to Westerners (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2001). Ch'oe Won-kyu argues in his study of foreign voluntary agencies in Korea that the introduction of charitable and philanthropic social welfare facilities by missionaries in the 1890s followed by military relief activities for refugees during the war actually laid the foundation for modern Korean social work and its focus on private and institutional care, thereby preventing the formulation of comprehensive social policy and planning.

It is even possible to say that modern Western aid and assistance to developing countries actually was established after the Korean War, as so many of these practices—including sponsoring, fostering and adopting of children, the setting up of hospitals and orphanages, and educational and technical assistance—were tested in Korea for the first time (Alvernaz & Tieszen, 1958; Molumphy, 1984 : 107-134; Tieszen, 1966). In this way, Korea became heavily dependent on foreign resources and private initiatives inhibiting the development of its own social welfare system. For instance, facilities received more support from foreign voluntary agencies if they had more children, thereby creating economic incentives for orphanage directors to take in as many children as possible.

CHILDREN OF WAR

The children of Korea suffered enormously during the war as Seoul changed hands four times and armies marched back and forth across the small peninsula, ravaging the country and causing tremendous destruction. Already in 1951, the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency estimated the number of orphaned children to number 100,000, and in 1953 there were 293,000 widowed women caring for 516,000 children under the age of thirteen (Republic of Korea National Red Cross, 1977 : 71; Ressler, Boothby & Steinbock, 1988 : 37-43). In 1954, when Western relief organisations started to arrive in the country, a total of 2 million people under the age of 18 had been displaced from their homes (International Union for Child Welfare, 1954).

The immediate response among the soldiers to the miserable plight of orphaned children was a whole mixture of evacuations, fundraising drives for food and clothing, the setting up of orphanages, and, most importantly, the spontaneous incorporation of children into care at military bases as regimental mascots, houseboys or interpreters. In many cases, these relationships developed into a kind of informal adoption (Tise, 1992). For example, in 1950 American pilots flew out 950 orphans

from Seoul as the city fell to the Northern side and placed them in an orphanage on Cheju Island. Known as "Operation Kiddy Car," this event was later immortalised by Hollywood in the film *Battle Hymn* (1956). Some of those war orphans, among the first to be adopted to the U.S. shortly after the war, have written compelling autobiographies bearing witness to the humanitarian aid the military rendered to Korean children (Anthony, 1960; Park Clement, 1998; White, 1995).

Between 1950-53, 1.3 million Americans served in Korea excluding smaller contingents from South Africa, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Ethiopia, France, Great Britain, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the Philippines, New Zealand, Thailand and Turkey, which also took part on South Korea's side in the war as U.N. troops (Halliday & Cumings, 1988; Hastings, 1988). In addition, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, India and Italy participated with military hospitals. Further, 60,000 American soldiers were to stay permanently stationed as the Eighth U.S. Army to protect America's security interests in the Pacific Asian region. As always in times of war, women fall to the lot of conquerors, and the Korean War did not turn out to be an exception to this rule. Not surprisingly, a sexual exploitation of Korean women took place on a mass scale during the war (Hanley, Choe & Mendoza, 2001).

The numerous Korean women who had intimate contacts with foreigners were shunned and stigmatised by the Korean society, as were their children in a country obsessed with miscegenation (National Human Rights Commission of Korea, 2003; Okazawa-Rey, 1997). Consequently, a mass migration of Korean wives of U.S. servicemen started immediately after the war, with 100,000 Korean women moving to America (Hong Sawon, 1982; Kim, Bok-Lim, 1972). These women, comprising 10 percent of all ethnic Koreans in the country, have played an important role in Korean-American history as it is estimated that 40-50 percent of all Koreans in the U.S. can trace their immigration to the sponsorship of a wife of an American military man.

The products of these unequal and all too often temporary relationships between U.N. soldiers and Korean women, known by the neologisms Amerasian, Eurasian or GI baby, were often abandoned by both parents and made up a good proportion of the estimated 10,000 children who lived on the streets after the war (Ressler, Boothby & Steinbock, 1988 : 37-43). The exact amount of mixed children who were born in Korea during those years is not known (Bowman, Gjenvick & Harvey, 1961 : 35-36). Hurh, Won-Moo (1972) estimates a total of 12,280 born between 1950-65, of whom half ended up being adopted to America or to other Western countries.

The issue of mixed children and war orphans and their difficult conditions in Korea were widely discussed in the Western media and the numbers were often exaggerated (Chakerian, 1962; Miller, 1971). National Geographic, Time, Life, Readers' Digest, Saturday Review and Ladies' Home Journal all published articles about mixed children in Korea, and the Christian relief organisation World Vision made a documentary. In 1954, World Vision's documentary *Other Sheep* toured America to inform the public of the plight of mixed war orphans in Korea. At a meeting in Portland, Oregon, Harry and Bertha Holt met with World Vision's president Dr. Bob Pierce in person. The meeting resulted in the couple's decision to adopt eight mixed children from Korea themselves, and in the end to start their own adoption agency.

The first formal international adoptions of Korean children took place in 1953 under the provision of the Seventh Day Adventists. Authorised by the Korean government, it was made possible by the Refugee Relief Act passed by the American Congress the same year which allowed the dubious practice of proxy adoption (Bowman, Gjenvick & Harvey, 1961 : 35; Chakerian, 1968). Yet, it is impossible to say that the four cases processed during the year are the first international adoptions from Korea as there is proof of earlier informal adoptions taking place already during the war.

A United Press telegram dated the 23rd of September 1952 states that the 10-year old Rhee, Song-Wo, one of those numerous orphans who had been taken care of by soldiers, is on his way to his adoptive home in America by a special permission from presidents Truman and Rhee setting aside the then ruling racially based immigration law banning entry of Asians. Other wartime articles mention plans to adopt orphans, and in 1951 American authorities openly warned their soldiers not to become too attached to unofficially adopted children in Korea (*Pacific Stars and Stripes* 8/21/51). In July of 1952, Kim, Yoon-Joong arrived to San Francisco as the foster son of Mr. and Mrs. Beauchamp. Yoon-Joong had been their son Victor's bearer in Korea before he was killed, and Victor's last wish was that his parents would bring the Korean boy to the U.S. Accordingly, an unknown number of Korean children must have ended up in Western countries accompanied by homecoming military and diplomatic personnel, missionaries and relief workers as the first adoptive parents already during the years of war.

The complete absence a legal framework worried the Korean government during these initial wild years of international adoption from Korea when foreign individuals and voluntary agencies considered themselves to be guardians of the country's children. The sheer chaos in war-torn Korea

makes it possible to understand how easy and tempting it must have been for U.N. soldiers and other Westerners just to grab any Korean “parentless” child roaming the streets and bring her or him out of the country. In 1952, the Korean government introduced a welfare facilities system and foster parents’ plan as a response to the many children orphaned by the war. These steps were to become the beginning of domestic adoption in Korea (Yi, Mi-Son, 2001 : 6). In 1955, the National Assembly tried to create a law for international adoption, but the draft was considered too premature (Yi, Son-Ok, 2001 : 30). Instead, preparations for a second attempt started from 1957 when the Children’s Charter was promulgated which in the end led to the adoption law of 1961.

On the 20th of January 1954, with a presidential order and under the patronage of the South Korean First Lady, Francisca Donner, Child Placement Service (Adongyanghohoe) was set up with initial grants from abroad and subordinated to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs for the purpose of providing international adoption of mixed children to the U.S. and other Western countries which had participated on the Southern side in the war (Bowman, Gjenvick & Harvey, 1961 : 43-44; Chakerian, 1963 : 19-20; Tahk, 1983). Between 1954-57, Child Placement Service worked together with the Geneva based International Social Service, handling child welfare issues since the 1920s, and signed bilateral agreements with the various receiving countries like with Sweden in 1966 (Department of Social Affairs, 1967 : 38-41).

In 1955, a third authorised agency entered the scene as Catholic Relief Service began placing Korean children in Catholic families in America. In 1957, International Social Service initiated its own adoption program (discontinued in 1966), and in 1958 Pearl S. Buck’s Welcome House also started to adopt children from Korea (Bowman, Gjenvick & Harvey, 1961 : 44-45; Miller, 1971). In 1956 the American farmer Harry Holt who, in 1955, had adopted eight mixed children from Korea himself, founded the adoption agency which still bears his name. Holt’s agency rapidly developed into both Korea’s and the world’s dominating organisation in the field of international adoption, placing half of the adoptions from Korea and altogether more than 100,000 children from various non-Western countries (Holt, 1982, [1956] 1992a, 1992b; Holt Children’s Services, 1985; Holt International Children’s Services, 1992).

Actually it is most likely that without the activities of Holt, international adoption from Korea would never have developed into the gigantic dimensions that it did. From the beginning, according to many vocal critics from the professional adoption field, the Holt agency conducted speedy procedures, overused proxy adoption, making “mail order babies” possible, disregarded minimum standards,

chartered whole flights filled up with children which were perceived by many as modern slave ships, and accepted couples who had been rejected by other agencies, while at the same time prioritising Christian fundamentalists as adoptive parents and paying attention to specifications for age and sex as well as race-matching (Herman, 2002). Harry Holt, having no previous experience at all in child welfare, was instead feverishly driven by a Christian fundamentalist zeal to rescue the children of Korea. Holt, quoting Isaiah 43:5, prophetically conceived international adoption to play a part in a divine scheme for the fulfilment of God's will (Holt, [1956] 1992a : 55) :

I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back : bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name : for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

The evangelical couple from Oregon turned into celebrities for their missionary-style emergency program to rescue the mixed children of Korea, and attracted so much attention in both Korea and in the U.S. that many today believe that they not only initiated adoption of Korean children but international adoption itself. Successful lobbying by Holt saw the realisation of the so-called Orphan Bill passed by the American Congress in 1957, thus replacing the temporary Refugee Relief Act and securing the future for international adoption from Korea to the U.S. In 1961, with a congressional amendment of the Immigration and Nationality Act, international adoption was finally given a permanent place in American law. This bill also put a stop to proxy adoption (Breckenridge, 1977).

Between 1953-59, 2,899 Korean children were adopted overseas, excluding missing data from Catholic Relief Service, a small number adopted through American Soul Clinic and the private adoptions going through, for example, staff at the Scandinavian administered National Medical Center and Scandinavian Mission to Korea. Miller (1971) estimated one or two hundred a year, and more than half went through Holt. A majority were mixed as their ratio constituted 70-90 percent until 1959 when full-Korean children started to take over. It was mainly Holt that at an early stage had moved into adoption of full-Korean children as 85 percent of the Seventh Day Adventist placements and 60 percent of those by Child Placement Service were registered as mixed (Bowman, Gjenvick & Harvey, 1961 : 41-43). Chin Kim and Timothy Carroll (1975) give the exact number of 4,494 mixed children being adopted abroad between 1958-74, of whom 955 were of African-American origin. The children who left the country during this first stage of international adoption from Korea were

predominantly girls, abandoned on the streets during and after the war or relinquished at institutions or directly to adoption agencies (Ministry of Health and Welfare 1999). The main country of destination was the United States where Korean children would dominate international adoption for 38 years in a row. In addition, small numbers had started to arrive in Norway (from 1955), in Sweden (from 1957) and in England (from 1958).

THE ADOPTION INDUSTRY

In 1960, the student uprising of April 19 ended president Syngman Rhee's increasingly autocratic rule, and it was followed by a period of democratisation. But the military revolution of 1961 abruptly stopped this short experience with democracy, and installed a dictatorial military regime characterized by harsh oppression of students and workers that was governed by fierce anti-Communism, developmentalism and modernisation theory (Choi, Chung-Moo, 1995; Shin Gi-Wook, 1998). At the time of the military take-over, Korea was still an agrarian society suffering from typical developing country symptoms of mass poverty and overpopulation. The two principal measures implemented to decrease the population were family planning and emigration, while international adoption was used as a combination of both (Lee, Sea-Baick, 1989). Hence, the era of authoritarian regimes with Park Chung Hee (1961-79) and Chun, Doo-Hwan (1981-87) were to become the years when international adoption witnessed its heydays as three out of four of all placements occurred during the period.

One of the first actions of the military government was to pass the Orphan Adoption Special Law (Koaibyangt'ugryebop), Korea's first modern adoption law, on September 30, 1961, followed by the Child Welfare Act, to facilitate international adoption as an alternative to costly institutional care (Chang, Pil-Wha, 1996; Kim Chin & Carroll, 1975; Tahk, 1986a). Through this decree, a legal basis for international adoption of Korean children was finally established, making private adoptions illegal and establishing a framework for the most effective adoption program in the world with efficient agencies, speedy procedures and secure logistics (Penner, 1996 : 35-36; Pyon, Yi & Kim, 1999 : 47-48). After an amendment in 1967, the law stipulated every adoption to take place according to Korean law and through a government licensed agency working closely with a Western counterpart, both of which charged fees to adoptive parents (Tahk, 1986a : 80-81). The agencies mandated for international adoption were expected to employ professional social workers, doctors and nurses to run the orphanages as well as to provide foster care and domestic adoption.

In 1964, Korea Social Service began to process international adoptions and it was the first agency to be entirely run by Koreans. In 1965 Child Placement Service was reorganised as a private agency and renamed Social Welfare Society in 1972 (Tahk, 1983, 1986a). In 1972 Eastern Child Welfare Society was founded as the fourth of the Korean agencies still handling international adoption today. Thus, at the beginning of the 1970s as many as seven agencies operated in the field : Seventh Day Adventists, Child Placement Service, Catholic Relief Service, Holt Children's Services, Korea Social Service, Welcome House and Eastern Child Welfare Society (Chakerian, 1968 : 49-57). To balance the numbers of international adoptions, a special agency for domestic adoption was created in 1964. Called Christian Adoption Program in Korea, it was later absorbed by Holt in 1976 (Chakerian, 1968; Miller, 1971; Yi, Mi-Son, 2001 : 7). Between 1962 and 1970, a program for domestic adoption was openly promoted, requiring the country's government workers and officials to take care of an orphan. As a result of this compulsory nationalistic campaign, the decade ended as the only one in which domestic adoptions exceeded international ones—8,247 cases versus 6,166 (Chong & An, 1994 : 13).

The family planning program launched in 1962 was to become the most successful population control policy in any developing country in terms of accomplishing the objective of lowering the fertility rate. By the time it was dissolved at the end of the 1980s, the average number of children per woman had decreased from 6.3 in 1960 to 1.6 in 1990 (Kim, Son-Ung, 1981; Nam & Ro, 1981). The program included birth control and sex education, the popularisation of different types of contraceptives, economic incentives and tax reductions to persuade families to have less children, a somewhat lenient one child policy, abortion which was made legal in 1973, and the wide use of sterilisation—with more than 200,000 cases registered between 1962-75 (Donaldson, 1981 : 251).

The program has been strongly criticised by Korean feminists for its complicity in having restricted the reproductive rights of women while at the same time having preserved the Confucia-based son preference and the male-centred family head registry system of hojuje (Cho, Hyung, 1997; Kim, Eun-Shil, 1996; Lee, Hye-Kyung, 1994; Oum, 2003). Yeonoak Baik and Jin, Young-Chung (1996) have identified other ramifications of the program such as a severe disproportion in the sex ratio and a high frequency in abortions. The skewed sex ratio at birth stood at 116.8 in 1990 compared to a normal 106.0, meaning that in 2015 there will be 700,000 extra males in the marriage market, and there are estimates that more than half of all married Korean have experienced an abortion due to son preference. Korea earned the reputation as an "abortion paradise" with one of the highest abortion ratios in the world (Kim, Tai-Hun, 1997; Park, Sook-Ja, 2001;

Tedesco, 1996). In 2003, the Korean birth rate had declined to a mere 1.17 representing the lowest in the world, and it is attributed to a trend in late marriage and a drastic increase in the number of divorces (Lowe-Lee, 2003). This demographic plunge should not come as a surprise after decades of patriarchal population policy in the forms of sex-biased abortions, adoptions and sterilisations, seriously decimating the fertility ratio of the female population, and the fact that tens of thousands of women have left the country for international marriage.

Sending people overseas to countries in need of cheap labour was another method used to decrease the population. From 1962, emigration programs to Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay in Latin America, to West Germany, France and Scandinavia in Europe and to oil producing countries like Saudi Arabia sent tens of thousands of Koreans abroad who contributed to the country's economic development by sending back remittances (Hong & Kim, 1979; Kim Dae Young & Sloboda, 1981 : 115-117; Stahl & Arnold, 1986; Yoo, 1996). Many of those who went overseas were actually re-migrants as there are estimates that half of all Koreans in Latin America and a quarter of those in the U.S. originated from the North (Grinker, 1998 : 104). Canada, Australia and more recently New Zealand were also popular destinations for Koreans leaving their country (Coughlan, 1995).

The most important host country during the post-war era was to be the United States, receiving three-quarters of those who went overseas and with annual immigration numbers from Korea exceeding 30,000 between 1974-90 (Chang, Edward Taehan, 2000; Hurh, 1998; Tomasko, 1996; Yoon, In-Jin, 2001). The main reasons for this are of course the country's semi-colonial status in the American world order, together with the 1965 change in American immigration law which since 1924 had discriminated against Asians (Lim, 1985; Takaki, 1998; Wu, 2002). However, contrary to domestic Korean writers, there is a tendency among Korean-American and Asian American scholars to neglect both international adoption and international marriage when accounting for the emigration history even if adoptees and military brides together constitute one in five of all Korean-Americans. These two groups, victims of a combination of American imperialism and Korean patriarchy, almost parallel each other in the statistics and can be seen as physical reminders of the huge power imbalance in the relationship between the two countries (Kim, Bok-Lim, 1977; Lowe, 1996). In total, between 1962-77, 300,000 Koreans left the country, with international marriage (16.9 percent), international adoption (14.8 percent), and invitation to work (68.1 percent) as the reasons registered (Hong & Kim, 1979 : 42). In total, 1 million Korean citizens have moved to other countries after the Korean War, of whom 15 percent are adoptees and at least as many wives of American soldiers and Western men (Overseas Koreans Foundation, 1999).

Within a period of 30 years from the start of the first five-year economic plan in 1962, the authoritarian developmental state of Korea transformed itself from an agricultural society to a modern industrial nation with an astonishing speed and a horrifying efficiency. Between 1967-76, 6.7 million people migrated from rural areas to the rapidly growing cities involving close to 20 percent of the population as the process of proletarianisation created factory workers out of peasants in barely one generation (Choi, Jang-Jip, 1995 : 28 : Song, Byung-Nak, 1992). In 1960, 39.9 percent of the population were engaged in agriculture compared to 9 percent in 1990, with 18.6 compared to 44.7 as the equivalent percentage distributions for industry.

An important aspect of Korean industrialisation emphasised by Hagen Koo (2001 : 23-45) in his study of the formation of the Korean working-class was the heavy reliance on female labour. The rate of proletarianisation was higher among women than among men - an increase of 7.4 times between 1963-85 has been noted compared to five times for the males. In 1976, women constituted 53 percent of the industrial labour force, and two out of three were unmarried girls between 15-25 years, a fact important to bear in mind when trying to understand the conditions for international adoption from Korea during those decades, as many of these women were to become biological mothers (Hong, Sa-Won, 1981; Spencer, 1988).

As a result of the industrialisation of the country and the rapid disappearance of traditional extended family networks, international adoption was supplied by the tens of thousands of Korean children often born to young factory workers (yogong) who were abandoned, and declared foundlings in the brutal turmoil of internal migration and urbanisation. The number of abandoned children increased dramatically from 715 in 1955 to 11,319 in 1964 after when it started to slow down, while the number of orphanage inmates reached its peak in 1967 with 71,816 children affiliated to 602 institutions (Miller, 1971). Between 1955-70, a total of 80,520 children were abandoned with urban poverty as the reason stated for half of the cases followed by disability (18.5 percent), family break-up (11.4 percent), neglect by parents (6.7 percent), illegitimacy (5.5 percent) and prostitution (4.5 percent) (Chakerian, 1968 : 36-39).

At the end of the 1960s, Korea's international adoption program suddenly gained worldwide popularity. Even if the initial impetus arose out of a rescue mission to adopt mixed children, international adoption had become a last resort for infertile middle-class couples, under pressure to live up to the post-war mandate of building a normative nuclear family. In the West, adoption was legitimised by a left-liberal ideology that framed it as a progressive, anti-racist act of rescuing a destitute child from the "miseries of the Third World", and a way to create a so-called rainbow family (Benet, 1976 : 120-126; Kirton, 2000; Masson, 2001; Solinger, 2003 : 20-32; Triseliotis, 2000). The demand from Western countries for Korean children increased

concurrently with a growing shortage of working-class children available domestically. This was a result of the legalisation of abortion, increased availability of contraceptives, a growing societal tolerance for single mothers who became eligible for government welfare, but, above all, the general strengthening of women's rights after the sexual revolution of 1968 (Doreen Farrar, 1999; Solinger, 1992; Zelizer, 1985) was a major contributing force.

International adoption became almost synonymous with adoption from Korea, and was perceived as a bonding strategy to develop friendship ties between Korea and the host countries. In 1973, Holt's director Jack Theis stated : "Korean orphans adopted abroad have turned into some of the country's best goodwill ambassadors" (Korea Newsreview, 2/10/73). Two years later, the Swedish ambassador Bengt Odevall said in an interview :

The adoption program is one of the most successful undertakings between our two countries. Some 3,400 Korean orphans adopted by Swedish families from 1967 to 1974 have been well integrated into their adoptive families. I might say the relations between us can be likened to a blood-bonded one in consideration of the successful adoption program (Korea Newsreview, 10/18/75).

Canadian social worker Sydney Byma (1974) also warned that international adoption actually hindered the development of a domestic social welfare system in Korea, while International Social Service and Save the Children concluded that the existence of an efficient adoption policy in Korea encouraged parents to abandon their children in their belief of a better material life in a Western country, or, even more disturbingly, to use adoption as form of retroactive abortion (Kim, Una, 2002; Lee, Hye-Kyung, 1993; Korea Newsreview, 12/21/74). An even stronger response came from Dag Ahlander (1976), secretary at the Swedish embassy in Seoul as he informed his countrymen that international adoption must be considered a Western upper-class phenomenon and that it causes strongly negative reactions in the countries of origin. Ahlander referred to how Korean media had portrayed the leading adopting country of Sweden in a negative way as the Swedes demanded more and more Korean children. Further, the Council of Europe (1980 : 44-45) expressed concern over its usage in exchange for both economic aid and political support.

The first half of the 1970s also saw international adoption as playing a part in the struggle for legitimacy waged between the two Koreas. North Korea accused its southern neighbour of selling Korean offspring for profit to Westerners (Park, Soon-Ho, 1994 : 52). The negative attention led to several panic-stricken temporary stops to Northern Europe and the promotion of domestic adoption, while the adoption program itself was transformed into something close to a state secret as its numbers were classified from 1974 and

separated from emigration and diaspora statistics (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2002; Pyon, Yi & Kim, 1999 : 47).

The temporary stops mainly concerned the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Norway and Denmark between 1970-75, partly motivated by a high preponderance of disrupted adoptions where adoptees were placed at institutions and foster homes and the discovery of cases of maltreatment of adopted Korean children in those countries, and partly by the open reporting of North Korea criticism in the left-leaning Scandinavian media (Dagens Nyheter, 1/7/71; Korea Newsreview, 2/8/75; Korea Times 12/15/74; Seoul Shinmun, 12/5/74). Nevertheless, business resumed after intense lobbying from the three Scandinavian countries. Particularly, Sweden played an important role in the campaign to abolish the temporary prohibitions by making use of its position in the U.N. Security Council. During the turbulent period, adoptive parents were encouraged to come to Korea and pick up their children to avoid negative publicity of escorted “mail order babies”, and they were explicitly told to observe secrecy in the media concerning their adoption of Korean children.

In response to the North Korean accusations and to bolster the negative image of the country, a revision of the law, in 1976, renaming it the Special Adoption Law (Ibyangt'ugryebop), made domestic adoption, foster care and sponsorship easier, and a plan for the gradual phasing out of international adoption by 1981 (with the exception from mixed and handicapped children) was announced (Breckenridge, 1977; Chun, Byung - Hoon, 1989; Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2002; Sarri, Baik & Bombyk, 1998; Korea Herald, 9/15/76; Korea Times, 7/18/86). At the same time, the number of receiving countries was restricted to eleven, and the agencies, limited to four, were required to be wholly run by Koreans : Social Welfare Society, Holt Children's Services, Korea Social Services and Eastern Child Welfare Society. The Five Year Plan for Adoption and Foster Care (1976-81) aimed at reducing the number of international adoptions by 1,000 annually and simultaneously increasing domestic adoptions by 500 through the introduction of a system of quotas. Regulated by the Social Welfare Society, the quota was based on the number of domestic adoptions placed the previous year (Kim, Una, 2002; Yun, Yong-Su, 1993 : 42-43).

In 1979, president Park, Chung-Hee was killed by one of his closest aides, and, as before, after a short democratisation period, a new military strongman, Chun Doo Hwan, came to power through a coup d'etat. In 1980, the new government discontinued the 1976 policy when it was evident that the plan would not be fulfilled due to a failure in increasing domestic adoption. It outlined a new approach to international adoption, integrating adoption into the so-called non-governmental foreign policy (mingan oegyo) to expand the

emigration program and develop friendship ties with Western allies (Sarri, Baik & Bombyk, 1998; Korea Times, 10/12/80). Through a process of government deregulation, the quota system was abolished, and the four agencies were allowed to compete with each other send unrestricted numbers of adoptable children abroad.

Consequently adoptions increased dramatically, resulting in the largest number ever to be sent abroad in one decade—66,511 international placements (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1999). The 1980s were also the years showing the highest emigration movement from Korea to nearly the same Western countries affected by international adoption. The agencies engaged themselves in profit-making activities, real estate investments, and were running their own delivery clinics, foster homes and temporary institutions. After a scandal broke out in 1984 around the international placements of missing children without the knowledge or consent of their biological parents, abandoned children were no longer eligible for adoption. Since then, a growing number of maternity homes for young, unwed mothers have been the main source for newborn and healthy babies (O, 1994; Yi, Son-Ok, 2001 : 37). By the 1980s, Korea had achieved an acceptable level of economic wealth, and Park In Sun (1998 : 229) has called those who were dispatched abroad as “goodwill ambassadors” in the decade of “the forgotten children,” “victims in a pursuit of greater national economic prosperity.” The years between 1984 and 1988 saw international adoption from Korea peaking with 6,500-9,000 cases a year, representing an amazing 1-1.4 percent of the country’s annual living births (Kim, Una, 2002).

Already from the beginning of the 1970s, the absolute majority of the children adopted overseas were by now full Korean and still mostly girls, although the proportion of boys was on the increase. The abandoned children who had constituted 55-65 percent of the total in the 1960s as well as those coming from broken families had, by the end of the decade, increasingly been replaced with the children of unmarried mothers from middle-class backgrounds. About half of the children were from these unwed women, with the remaining half still comprised of young factory workers (Spencer, 1988; Tahk, 1986a, 1986b). Furthermore, the ratio of disabled children was gradually growing, constituting one out of four adoptions. Among the receiving countries, it is no coincidence that those who had sided with the anti-Communist alliance in the war and continued to be important political allies and trade partners took in the most children; the United States, Norway and Sweden beginning in the 1950s, Denmark, Canada, France, Australia, Belgium and the Netherlands from the 1960s, and, finally, Luxembourg in 1984. In addition, since the 1960s, Korean children also went to West Germany, Italy and Switzerland and smaller numbers to England, New Zealand, Ireland, Spain and Finland.

NEW DIRECTIONS

The events of June 1987—student demonstrations, labour strikes and massive popular protests—ended 26 years of military rule as president Chun was forced to step down and announce the opening of democratic elections (Cumings, 1997 : 386-392; Lindstrom, 1993). Even though his right-hand man Roh, Tae-Woo was elected president in the following December election due to an unfortunate split in the opposition, Roh's government (1988-92) is commonly seen as the transitional stage to full democracy in Korea.

The 1988 Seoul Olympic Games showcased a proud and newly democratized and industrialized Korea to the world. Yet Western journalists started to write about the adoption program, and portrayed the host country as the leading global exporter of children. Criticism of international adoption had been heard before in Korea, but never had the negative attention been as strong and massive as in 1988. As a result, during the Olympics, sending Korean children abroad was temporarily suspended to avoid further negative attention, and the following year the number of international adoptions was reduced substantially.

In September of 1989, new guidelines for the improvement of the country's adoption policy and practice were issued with the purpose of reducing the annual numbers of children going abroad and to eventually stop adoptions by 1996, excepting mixed and disabled children. Adoption agencies were publicly criticized for having overcharged for both domestic and international adoptions and for having provided generous "delivery fees" to medical institutes in their quest for adoptable children (Sarri, Baik & Bombyk, 1998; Yun, Yong-Su, 1993 : 44-45; Korea Herald, 9/9/89). Tax reductions were provided to encourage domestic adoption, which was projected to grow by 400-600 placements a year, while overseas placements were restricted to relinquishment cases—in reality, children born by young, unwed mothers at the agencies' delivery clinics and maternity homes.

In August 1994, this second government plan to phase out international adoption was overturned on the grounds that the number of domestic adoptions remained too low, and, instead, an annual flexible decrease of 3-5 percent was set up with a more distant deadline of 2015 (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2002; Pyon, Yi & Kim, 1999 : 53-54). In 1995, the adoption law was changed to its present name, Special Law on Adoption Promotion and Procedure (Ibyangch'okjin mit cholch'ae kwanhan t'ugryebop), and this law underwent two smaller revisions in 1999 and 2000 (Yun, Hye-Mi, 1995). Between 1991 and 1997, the Korean government managed to keep the number of adoptions down to a little over 2,000 cases a year, but during the Asian economic "IMF crisis" of 1997-99, international adoption was allowed to increase again and

placements of “IMF orphans” contributed to an increase to 2,400 children annually (Kim & Finch, 2002). At the same time, the government has encouraged domestic adoption, which, by the end of the 1990s, stood for one-third of all adoptions. Also, since the end of the economic crisis, the government has strived to create a long-term foster care system based on Western models as an alternative to adoption (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2002).

As a result of these efforts 22,925 children were adopted overseas during the 1990s, the absolute majority being extramarital. It is estimated that between 80-90 percent of all children in the country born out-of-wedlock end up for adoption compared to for example 1 percent in United States (Chandra, Abma, Maza & Bachrach, 1999; see Dong-A Ilbo 9/27/01). This is in spite of the fact that Korea, with 1 percent of women experiencing teenage motherhood, has the lowest rate of teenage pregnancy among all OECD countries, while United States with 22 percent is topping the list (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2001). In addition, 4 percent of the Korean population is estimated to live below poverty line while the equivalent proportion for United States is 12.7 percent.

The relinquishing mothers are nowadays mostly teenagers or at least under the age of 25 years, often spending their pregnancies behind the secluded walls of the agencies’ maternity homes, and the majority comes from a middle-class background where the stigma of pre-marital sexual activity or a former marriage has the potential to ruin future social advancement for both the parent and the child (Yi, Son-Ok, 2001 : 70-73). The proportion of boys is slightly higher than girls, while as many as one out of three are categorised as disabled. Lastly, the receiving countries have been restricted to nine as of 2002 : United States, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, Australia, Canada and the Netherlands.

Park In Sun (2002) points out that the current Korean situation is strongly reminiscent of the situation in Western countries before the change of mores that took place after the sexual revolution of the 1960s. She indicates that Korea will soon also have to look after its children, rather than blaming the consequences of war or the prioritisation of economic growth during Korea’s rapid industrialization. These excuses are still sometimes used to hide behind, not to mention the self-Orientalizing image of Confucian thinking and bloodline clannishness. This culturalist explanation is, of course, as shallow as those used by Westerners to legitimise the adoption imperative for extramarital or divorced children, prior to the 1960s sexual revolution (see Solinger 1992 : 166).

On the other hand, as the number of refugees from North Korea continues to increase, the adoption of

North Korean children by South Koreans may, in a not too distant future, become a reality. Actually, ethnic Korean children from Manchuria have already started to arrive as adoptees, albeit in very small numbers (Wolgan Chosun, 1/7/02). In January of 2002 two orphaned North Korean children who, together with thousands of other parentless children, had crossed into Manchuria via the Tumen River border area in search for food, were provided asylum in South Korea, and in the debate that followed the American missionary Tim Peters stated in an interview :

I think adoption is an excellent solution. You might remember that many orphaned South Korean children were adopted by Western families after the Korean War. It is time for South Koreans to do the same (Korea Times, 3/18/02).

After more than half a century, international adoption continues. International adoption is too often used to get rid of “impure” and costly children whether stigmatised by illegitimacy (sasaenga), by disability (changae’a) or by race (honhyola). Mixed-race children have somewhat ironically returned as an adoption category, this time fathered by guest workers from South or Southeast Asia and consequently known as Kosian children. Not surprisingly, the United Nations’ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has also repeatedly criticised Korea for not implementing measures to counter sexual, social or racial discrimination, while its Committee on the Rights of the Child expresses concern for the continuance of international adoption from a country that has the world’s 12th largest economy (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2003).

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