

International Korean Adoption – Facts

By Mihee-Nathalie Lemoine

Vocabulary

Adoption	ibyang (입양)
Adoptee child	ibyang-a (입양아)
Adoptee adult	ibyang-in (입양인)
International adoption	Haewae ibyang (해웨 입양)
International adoptee	Haewae ibyang-in (해웨 입양인)
Birth parents	Jjin pumo (亲生 부모)
Birth mother	Jjin Omoni (亲生 어머니)
Birth father	Jjin Aboji (亲生 아버지)
Adoptive parents	Yang pumo (양 부모)
Adoptive mother	Yang Omoni (양 어머니)
Adoptive father	Yang Aboji (양 아버지)
Orphanage	KoaWon (고아원)
Family register	Hojeok (호적)
Adoption agency	Sawhae bokji (사회복지)
Mixed-blood	Honyeol (혼혈)

Time line

- 1953 – An Swedish ex-nazi started the international adoption from Korea to pay his social debt
- 1954 – Rev. Harry Holt from Oregon adopted 8 Amerasian children from Korea after reading a Bible chapter telling him to send overseas children from the “East” (Isaiah)
- 1976 – Korean government legalize 4 Korean adoption agencies (Holt, SWS, KSS, ECSWS).
- 1986 – AKF : First adoptee Association, Sweden
- 1988 – The Korean government promised to stop international adoption from Korea in 1996
- 1988 – “Adoption” by Mihee-Nathalie Lemoine, first Korean adoptee film, Belgium
- 1990 – “Susan Brings Arirang” film on Susan Brinks (Sweden) acted by Choe Jinshil
- 1990 – Snapshot : Korean adoptees Exhibit (Korean American Museum, Los Angeles)
- 1991 – Arirang – First Adoptee Association in the Netherlands
- 1991 – E.K.L, Belgium (Mihee Nathalie Lemoine, David Nelissen, Jung Miae)
- 1994 – Racines coréennes, France (Yolaine Cellier)
- 1995 – Dongari, Switzerland (Jan Wenger)
- 1995 – Minnesota Adult Adoptee Association (Korean Church)
- 1996 – Eats to West Exhibit, First Korean adoptee exhibition in Korea (Samsung Ins. Gallery)
- 1997 – K.O.A. (Korean Overseas Adoptees) adult adoptees’ Rights (Mihee-Nathalie Lemoine)
- 1998 – “Seeds from a silent tree” anthology by Korean adoptees, USA
G.O.A’L (Global Overseas Adoptees’Link), Mihee-Nathalie Lemoine, Amy Nafzger, Lee Gutwirth, Myriam Jongejeugd
- 1999 – F-4 : First visa allowed for adoptee
- 2007 – TRACK : adoptee association to sue Korean adoption agencies for their illegal work
- 2005 – ASK : adoptee assoc. to stop Korean int’l adoption and to promote domestic adoption
- 2009 – “Resilience” by Tammy Chu on birth mothers lack of rights
- 2012 – End of Korean international adoption

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Adoption agencies

Before 1976, international adoption from Korea could be done by travel agencies, private lawyers, Christian organization, and adoption agencies. Many adoption made at that period of time were “illegal”

Since 1976, the Korean government pinpointed 4 official adoption agencies.

Holt Adoption Agency : USA, France, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Switzerland,

Child Placement (now named Social Welfare Society – SWS) : Sweden, USA, Canada, Belgium

Korea Social Services (KSS) : USA, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland

Eastern Child Social Welfare Services (ECSWS) : USA, Australia

International Adoption agencies

Terre des Hommes (Belgium, Switzerland)

Donadopt (Denmark)

Enfants du Monde (France, Belgium)

Verden Barn (Norway)

Wereld Kinderen (The Netherlands)

Children’s Bridge (Ontario)

Enfants d’Orient (Québec)

Sunrise Adoption (BC)

Approximative numbers

Australia	3 000 (since 1983)
Belgium	5 000 (since 1969) (+Luxembourg)
Canada	2 000
Denmark	5 000
France	15 000
Germany	
Holland	4 000 (since 1955)
Italy	500
Norway	7 000 (since 1953)
Sweden	13 000 (since 1953)
Switzerland	4 000
UK	500
USA	120 000 (Since 1954)

Cities, orphanages

Seoul (St Paul, CBH, Rokwon,, Chunghyun orph., Wyatt orph. etc...), Suwon (Ankara orph, Kyungdong orph.), Cheongnyani, Busan (Sungmo Orph., Sohwa Orph., etc.), Ilsan (Holt), Incheon (Star of Sea), Checheo (Baekhab orph.), Masan (Aeri orph.), Daejeon (CAPOK), Daegu (White Lily Orph), Cheongju (Bethel orph.), Jeonju (Bisabel oprh.), Gwangju (Youngshin orph), Mokpo (R.C.), Jeju.

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Context in the South Korean society

Lack of social welfare system, the Church serves as a replacement. The Korean international adoption is closely linked to the Christianity as a religious purpose.

The women in Korea have no “family register” of their own. They belong to a “male.” Either to their father if they are not married, if the father is death, they belong to their brother. If they are married, they belong to heir husband, and if the husband is death, they belong to their son.

Religion: Atheism 46.5%, Buddhism 22.8%, Protestantism 18.3%, Catholic 10.9%

South Korea has not sign the “The Hague convention on intercountry adoption.”
<http://adoption.state.gov/hague/overview.html>

Estimated Cost: \$20,000 to \$30,000 USD (in 2009)

Reasons of abandon in the South Korean society

In case of mix-blood (1953 – now)

Starting right after the Korean war (1950-1953), the first adoption to overseas countries were “accepted” as the Children from foreign father (American, Swedish’ etc...) and the South Korean patriarchal society, the children belong to the father. Because those mixed-race children were fathered by Foreigner, they so belong to the Foreign country. It was a good excuse to send away children from prostitutes, or unwanted mixed-race children.

In case of poverty (1953-1980)

The adoption system was so well “organized” for mixed-blood orphaned children, it soon led to send away the “pure” blood children from poverty, unmarried or divorced couple.

In case of unmarried or divorce couple (1960 - now)

Often the father want to re-marry and so will let the children to his parents. Realizing that the father will soon remarry, the children form a first marriage are not welcome anymore in their father’s life. The grand-parents or a family member will decide to give “away” those children (male or female to an orphanage or directly to an adoption agency).

Links

Truth and Reconciliation for the Adoption Community of Korea (T.R.A.C.K.):

<http://justicespeaking.wordpress.com/> - <http://www.facebook.com/posted.php?id=124569369223>

Korean Adoptee Solidarity

<http://www.adopteesolidarity.org/>

International Korean Adoptee Associations

<http://ikaa.org/en/...>

Global Oversea's Adoptee's Link

<http://www.goal.or.kr...>

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Biography

Nathalie (Korean-Belgian adoptee) and Clement (Korean-Canadian adoptee) will introduce a brief history of international adoption from South Korea, their experience as an adult adoptee visiting/returning in their Motherland and also their involvement in the Korean adoptee community in their adoptive country and in South Korea. With the understanding that Korean international adoption is a touchy topic for both Korean people and adoptive parents.

Mihee-Nathalie Lemoine (a.k.a. Cho Mihee) is a multimedia artist (painting, film/video, writing) and an activist for adoptee's rights. Adopted in Belgium in the first wave of Korean international adoption, she has co-founded the first Korean adoptee association in Belgium (1991) and South Korea (1994). Lemoine has lived 13 years in Seoul and came to Montreal 3 years ago.

http://www.myspace.com/nathalie_cho

<http://nathaliecho.blogspot.com/>

Clement Tae-Yong Graftey is an IT professional that is currently consulting with Avanade Canada. He first went back to the motherland in 2004 and has attended numerous "gatherings" since then. He has spent most of his life in Montreal.