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Introduction

Most of the boys and girls that came to Spain during the so called *boom of the international adoption* that had its highest pick in 2004 are still underage. However, in other countries with more tradition in this area, have already a high number of adoptees in other places, some of which have been making public their experiences and reflexions -and pressuring us into looking at the phenomenon of adoption into different perspectives-, both from the academic area and through artistic media.

This is the case of Tobias Hübinette, who wrote the central text of this Newsletter, in which he shares his reflections in relation to his life as an adoptee adopted in Korea by a Swedish family. Together with the visual artist Jane Jin Kaisen (born in Korea, raised in Denmark and currently living in the United States), he is the author of two *films* which topics relate to adoption and which we recommend in this Newsletter: the shortage *Adopting Belinda* and the film *Tracing Trades*. With this same title they baptised the multimedia installation in which they are both authors, and that has been displayed in the Feroe Islands' Art Museum and the National Museum of Photography in Denmark, within the project *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism*.

Tobias Hübinette and Jane Jin Kaisen have authorised us to replay in this Newsletter the contents of the *Tracing Tours* installation, including the audio tour, which you can listen to through the respective links.

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Reflections on being and becoming an adult transnational adoptee in Sweden

Presentation at AFIN's (Adopciones, familias, infancias) conference "The integration of international adoption" in Barcelona, Spain, May 7-8, 2010

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Firstly, I would like to thank the organisers of this event and particularly Dr. Diana Marre for having invited me to Catalonia, presently probably the world's leading transnationally adopting region in relation to its native-born population, and to Spain, a relative newcomer in the field of transnational adoption compared to my own home country Sweden which pioneered the practice itself as early as in the 1950s.

Secondly, as I have been asked to offer you a presentation of myself, I would like to state that I am here speaking from the combined perspectives and positions of both being an adult transnational adoptee myself as well as an adoption studies researcher and an adoptee movement activist to just mention some of the identifications that I relate to the most. In the following presentation, I will start by introducing my own adoption history and my own thoughts, feelings and analyses of what I here have chosen to call the process of being and becoming an adult transnational adoptee in Sweden.

I was born somewhere in the South Western part of the Republic of Korea, commonly known as South Korea, sometime during the summer of 1971, and according to the adoption documents I was found abandoned on a train in September of that year at the approximate age of one month.



Tobias as a baby

This means that I have no knowledge at all of my exact birth date, nor of my exact birth place as the train was moving, and I only know from where it departed and to where it was headed. Consequently, even though I have searched several times through the Korean media, I have unsurprisingly not been able to track and find my Korean family. After when I was found, I was placed at different institutions and in a foster family before I was adopted into Sweden at the age of 7-8 months in March 1972.

This was a time when South Korea was a developmental state ruled by an increasingly autocratic military dictator, while Sweden was something of a Social Democratic model state, and transnational adoption was rapidly replacing domestic adoption in most Western countries due to the revolutionising societal and cultural changes which followed in the wake of the so-called 1968 movement.

So in other words, I am without doubt both a direct product of a Third World dictatorship of an almost Fascist character which was on its way of becoming the country in the world that by far has adopted away the most of its own children in modern history given the close to 200,000 adopted Koreans spread out in more than 15 different countries, and a result of the radical and progressive spirit of the times in 1970s' Sweden, a country which in its turn proportionally has adopted the most foreign-born children of all Western countries with more than 50,000 transnational adoptees of whom 10,000 are from South Korea like myself.

Contrary to the vast majority of transnational adoptees who have ended up in the middle- and upper classes of Swedish society, I grew up in a working-class home in a small industrial town called Motala in the South Central part of Sweden together with a sister who arrived in Sweden three years later.



Tobias now

Interestingly enough, adoption research in Sweden has shown that the small minority of adoptees who grew up in working-class environments are strangely enough the ones who statistically fare the best as adults in terms of both psychic health and social advancement, a finding which goes against any other group in Swedish society which in spite of a relatively high degree of social equality is characterised by a more or less stable class reproduction from one generation to another like most other societies in the world.

As a teenager and as a young adult, I had no particular interest in my country of origin, and I did not pay much attention to the fact that I looked different from the white majority population of Sweden although I of course had my share of racial teasing and racial harassment like any other adoptee. This attitude is arguably more or less the norm for most transnational adoptees of Sweden, and not just as young adults but also as adults in general, reflecting a society which traditionally valorises a strong social cohesion and cultural homogeneity.

In my own research based on textual readings of adoptees' autobiographies and interviews with adult adoptees, I have analysed this attitude not just as an expression of the high demand for ethnic and national sameness and colour-blindness coming from Swedish society, but also as an identification with Whiteness and even with white bodies which is a result of the fact that most adoptees grow up and live in heavily segregated white middle- and upper-class areas and contexts and thus normally only have the white majority population surrounding them to mirror themselves against, whether in the form of adoptive parents and family members, partners and friends, or neighbours and colleagues.

Being an adult transnational adoptee, to refer to the title of this presentation, therefore means to be not just a Swede but also knowing as less as any other Swede about the birth country and about migrants coming from the same country or region living in Sweden. This is because usually in most cases there are few if any contact zones between adoptees and migrants in contemporary Sweden due to a sharply segregated society, and most adoptees therefore identify strongly with being white Swedes from the middle- and upper-classes in spite of inhabiting a non-white body.

In my case, it was when I was around 25 that I joined the association for adult adopted Koreans in Sweden and started to socialize with other adoptees from both Korea and other countries of origin, and it was also from then on that I started to travel to Korea regularly and to study Korean language, history and culture, first on a private level but soon at Stockholm University where I finally took my Ph.D. in Korean studies in 2005. Since then, I have been known in Sweden as a researcher within adoption and Asian studies and within ethnic and migration studies, as well as a public person raising and discussing issues relating to adoption and adoptees in the mass media and in the political discussion, and as an activist working for the worldwide adopted Korean movement which spans all the 15 countries that harbour adopted Koreans as well as Korea itself where a community of adopted Korean returnees is nowadays existing.

However, this process has its price as the surrounding Swedish environment in most cases does not expect a transnational adoptee to become as engaged with one's origin, and there is a strong risk to get further marginalized due to this "betrayal" towards something which can be likened to a contract that the adoptee has signed when arriving in Sweden; be like the Swedes, and do not be like those who live in your birth country or like the migrants, and as adoptees are the most privileged migrants there is a strong element of having to feel grateful and stay loyal. With Sweden being something of the paradise in the world, the fact that one may not feel satisfied with everything as an adoptee makes this feeling of having broken this "adoption contract" even stronger.

It is these years which I would like to call becoming an adult transnational adoptee in the sense that I have during the course of this process reconceptualised and reformulated my own position and categorisation within Swedish and also Western society and discovered new ways of relating myself to both local and global histories and contexts. As part of this process of not just being but becoming an adult transnational adoptee, I have been able to understand myself as being part of a larger movement of non-white people from the global South to the global North which has been going on for more than half a century by now, and which has its predecessors in colonial history in the form of for example the slave and "coolie" trades.

Furthermore, I have also been able to reinscribe myself within contemporary Korean history and society and as being a part of the worldwide Korean diaspora as well as an equally worldwide Asian community.

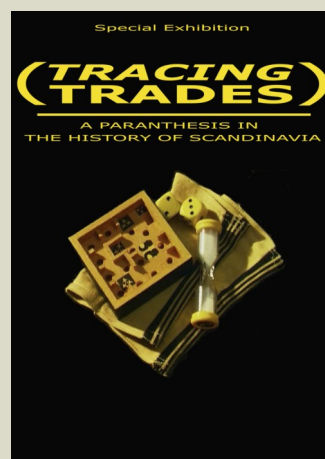
Deriving from my own personal memories of growing up and living in Sweden as a foreign-born person of colour from a so-called Third World country, I have also been able to understand the numerous experiences that I have encountered when my origin and my appearance have been highlighted and made significant, whether in a “positive” or in a negative manner, as a result of a combined ethnification and racialisation process that is going on in everyday life of Sweden reflecting the increasingly dichotomous division between Swedes and non-Swedes, Christians and non-Christians and whites and non-whites. It is precisely this everyday racism which adult transnational adoptees have to deal with caused by their foreign origin and different appearance, and which constantly and paradoxically clashes with their own identifications with their adoptive family, home country, Christianity, Whiteness, and the West, which I believe lies behind the worrying indications coming from Swedish quantitative adoption research and showing that all too many adult transnational adoptees have problems to reproduce their adoptive parents’ high social status in the meaning that they are performing poorly in the educational and labour market fields as well as when it comes to family formation and reproduction, and that many are suffering from psychosocial problems in the forms of loneliness and isolation, aggressive and self-destructive behaviour, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicide attempts.

So trying to conclude what I want to say with this introduction, as adults transnational adoptees of Sweden can be said to fall somewhere in-between native Swedes and foreign migrants although they themselves identify with the former group, and consequently usually only a minority search for and discover their roots as the societal pressure is strong to be like any other native Swede, while they at the same time are intermittently reminded of their foreign origin and racial Otherness by the outside world, and which goes against their identification with the majority population thereby causing strong confusion and tensions which can result in substantial psychosocial problems.

REFLECTIONS

Jane Jin Kaisen & Tobias Hübinette collaborated on a new multimedia installation titled **Tracing Trades: International Adoption and Nordic Colonialism** and a new multimedia performance in two parts titled **Transmitting: (Dis)ComfortAN(d)AlieNation** and **(Dis)ComfortAN(d)AlieNation: The X-Raced Mut(at)ed Speak**. Both the installation and the performance were produced specifically for Rethinking Nordic Colonialism and examined the phenomenon of intercountry adoption as a legacy of colonialism.

Tracing Trades: International Adoption and Nordic Colonialism consisted of an audio tour, two videos, text boards, artifacts, clippings, photographs, journals, books, and personal objects from private collections arranged in an installation that mimicked conventional ethnographic museum display. Kaisen & Hübinette describe the passage through the installation as follows: “Chasing and tracing the history of human trade and trafficking between the Korean Peninsula and Europe, the journey starts with the investigation of the history behind the mysterious Korean Man portrayed in a Rubens drawing. Francesco Carletti, a Florentine merchant in the 17th century, imported Antonio Corea, (whom the man in East Asian attire is assumed to portray) to Italy. Hence, he could well both be the first Korean (slave), and arguably, adoptee, touching European ground from the Korean Peninsula. Shedding light upon Korean-European relations, and particularly international adoption from South Korea (by number of deportations and industrial efficiency yet unprecedented in World History), the quest also leads to traces of the 19th century emigration of Scandinavians to North America, and especially to the state of Minnesota, largely inhabited by Scandinavian descendants and having the largest per capita population of Korean adoptees in the United States. Finally on a global scale, the Scandinavian countries Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, together with Iceland, Finland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands, have proportionally to the countries’ population sizes, by far adopted the most children in the world. The relationship between Lutheran Christian missionary sentiments and the Scandinavian welfare society models paved the way to legally and morally legitimizing mass scale 20th century international adoption.” Here we present the text boards and the links to the audio tour and videos.





Newsletter 18, August 2010

ADOPTIONS, FAMILIES, CHILDHOODS

Hur skall vi vänja vårt barn vid den nya miljön?

FRÅGA: Min man och jag väntar just på en liten fyraårig flicka från Korea. Vi har tidigare inga "egna" barn och heller inte så stor barneförening. Vi är också lyckliga över vår blivande lilla dotter – men samtidigt självklart oroliga och lite vilsekomna.

SVAR: Det är ju på bästa sätt vänta. Det är ju inte så mycket som att vänta på ett barn. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj.

JASA: ska du köpa dig ett nytt barn?

SVAR: Det är ju på bästa sätt vänta. Det är ju inte så mycket som att vänta på ett barn. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj.

Hundratals i kö för Koreabarn

SVAR: Det är ju på bästa sätt vänta. Det är ju inte så mycket som att vänta på ett barn. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj.

Slapp för adoption av barn från Korea?

SVAR: Det är ju på bästa sätt vänta. Det är ju inte så mycket som att vänta på ett barn. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj.

Stockholmare adopterar helst sydkoreanska barn

SVAR: Det är ju på bästa sätt vänta. Det är ju inte så mycket som att vänta på ett barn. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj.

Alien Adoptions to Continue

SVAR: Det är ju på bästa sätt vänta. Det är ju inte så mycket som att vänta på ett barn. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj.

- Vi är svenskar som kommer från Korea!

SVAR: Det är ju på bästa sätt vänta. Det är ju inte så mycket som att vänta på ett barn. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj. Det är ju att vänta på ett barn som kommer att bli en del av er familj.

Who were they? Where did they come from? What was their background?

We all know them. Especially in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, they came in large numbers. In fact, despite our limited knowledge about them, our region had the largest concentration in the world compared to the size of the native population.

As a species, the majority of those who lived here in Scandinavia were ethnic Koreans from South Korea and most of them "emigrated" when they were infants or minors. We see the largest concentrations in Denmark and in Sweden.



Audio Tour:

In addition to the exhibition, we provide a special audio tour with collected and restored audio material, revealing captivating supplementary knowledge about their thoughts from original and reconstructed recordings of private conversations, which have been saved in their community and archives.

Most of the audio tour are extracts of personal thoughts and experiences from a well-kept series of recordings by a Swedish-Korean adoptee and a Danish-Korean adoptee. For some reason, they saved these recordings. Whether they were going to use them for a specific purpose, or preserved them for sentimental reasons, remains uncertain.


During the cleaning after the incident at the Department of Oriental Studies in Stockholm, Sweden, where the most extensive collection to this date was placed, these private recordings were found and have been restored for the exhibition.

From these private conversations, we can gain knowledge about their thoughts and views, not only about their personal experiences, but also about the missing links in our understanding of their culture and history.

You can either choose to listen through audio tour in its entirety (20:30 minutes), or you can navigate through the tour with the "forward" / "rewind" buttons on the display. On the exhibition displays, you can navigate through the audio guide by pressing the number indicated next to the logo as you explore the exhibition.

The Audio tour will take you through the different sections of the exhibition from the archive display with more informative recounts to recordings of more personal stories.

Number of international adoptions from Korea, 1953-2004.

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	2003	2,287
1954	8	1964	462	1974	5,302	1984	7,924	1994	2,262	2004	2,258
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 pr. decade	2,899		6,166		46,035		66,511		22,925		
Total	1960-2004										156,242

Source: South Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare



1) Leaving Traces

An insight into their thoughts and their attempts to create and document their own history.

2) The Archive

This audio sequence explains how they tried to build an archive containing their history and why it was important to them.



Destination by country of adopted Koreans

Country	Population	Intl. adoptees	Adoptees from Korea	Overseas Koreans
Sweden	9,001,774	45 332	8953	990
Denmark	5 427 459	18 878	8571	240
Norway	4,593,041	14 122	6080	285
Faroe Islands	48,407	100	36	?
Iceland	293,966	180	22	6
Finland	5,223,442	2749	9	112
Greenland	56,854	?	7	?
Minnesota	4,919,479	25 000	15 000	12 000

Source: South Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare

Destination by country of adopted Koreans table II (1953-2004)

Main countries 1953-2004	Number	Other countries 1960-84	Number
United States 1953-2004	104,319	New Zealand 1964-1984	559
France 1968-2004	11,090	Japan 1962-1982	226
Sweden 1957-2004	8,953	Okinawa 1970-1972	94
Denmark 1965-2004	8,571	Buland 1970	47
Norway 1955-2004	6,080	Ireland 1968-1975	12
Netherlands 1969-2003	4,099	Poland 1970	7
Belgium 1969-1995	3,697	Spain 1968	5
Australia 1969-2004	3,147	China 1967-1968	4
Germany 1965-1996	2,352	Guam 1971-1972	3
Canada 1967-2004	1,841	India 1960-1964	3
Switzerland 1968-1997	1,111	Paraguay 1969	2
Luxembourg 1984-2004	492	Ethiopia 1961	1
Italy 1965-1981	382	Finland 1984	1
England 1958-1981	72	Hong Kong 1973	1
Other countries 1956-1995	66	Tunisia 1969	1
		Turkey 1969	1
Total	156,272		967



A PARANTHESIS IN HISTORY

STATISTICS

According to statistics they were sometimes included in our registers as immigrants since they were born in another country. At other times, they were filed as "Danish" or "Swedish" as they obtained citizenships upon arrival. This has confused researchers ever since. In Denmark and Sweden they were marked with a special social security number (1010, 9XXX OR 6XXX) in the end to indicate that they were international adoptees, but this law was changed in the 1980s on objections from adoptive parents.



Family background of adopted Koreans 1958-2004.

Years	Abandoned	Family problem	Unwed 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	1	-	2,364	2,365
2003	2	2	2,283	2,287
2004	-	1	2,257	2,258
Total	29,946	28,795	96,109	154,850

Source: South Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare

"Immigration" from South Korea to the United States 1950-2001

Year	Total Number	Adoptees	Korean wives to U.S. Men
1950-59	5528	2,997 = 54%	1987 = 36%
1960-69	34,513	4,989 = 14%	11 641 = 34%
1970-79	242,063	24,678 = 10%	42 044 = 17%
1980-89	338,891	44,228 = 13%	40 278 = 12%
1990-99	187,609	18,521 = 10%	17 748 = 9%
2000	5,244	1,794 = 34%	1095 = 21%



...And why did they come here?

Also, this question proves difficult to answer as conventions demanded that they were labeled "orphaned" in order to be adopted.

Also, many biological parents, if they wished to divorce, put their children temporarily in orphanages as "abandoned" to make the procedure of divorce move faster.

In the mean time, the adoption agencies could adopt the children overseas as the parents had signed papers officially abandoning the child, although many did this in the belief that they could get their child back after the divorce.

Number of international adoptions from Korea 1953-2004.

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
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Total pr. decade	2,899	6,166	46,035	66,511	22,925						
Total 1960-2004										156,242	

Source: South Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare



5) Surprises in History

Nazism and adoption.

How Nazism is part of their history and how the Nazis viewed them and why some Adoptees voted for extreme right wing parties.

6) Their relationship to their agencies

Short recording about their relationship to their agency and the adoption process.



Reason for abandonment 1965

Poverty	53,4%
Handicap	18,5%
Family problem	11,4%
Neglect	6,7%
Illegitimacy	5,5%
Prostitution	4,5%

Source: South Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare



Adoption agencies under fire for excessive competition

한글 '이베리카 드림' 제각각고 논란

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Marital status and age of biological mother

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Unmarried Mother	80,1%	80,1%	87,9%	93 %	87,2 %	97,2 %
Teenager	59,6%	61,6	60,5 %	63,8%	61,2%	64,9 %

Educational level of biological mother

Year	Middle school	High school	College
1975-79	65,3%	22,1%	2,5%
1980-84	64 %	27,8%	2,4%
1985-89	57,1%	34,6%	3,2%
1990-94	43,3%	50 %	4,2%
1995-97	42,6%	50,5%	5,2%

Profession of biological mother

Year	Unemployed	Student	Service	Other
1975-79	40,4%	2,6%	10,2%	40,3%
1980-84	44,7%	3,3%	10,8%	37,6%
1995-97	40,7%	17,6%	9,9 %	30 %

Status of biological mother 1996-2001
Source: Holt 2002

Imaginaries and Socio-Economic Status

To sum up the exhibition, we may ask ourselves how we treated and perceived them. Most of them lived quiet lives, having melted completely into Scandinavian culture. Those resisting this acculturation were more often reluctant to the procedures and opinions about adoption.

More and more information about their activities is becoming accessible to us. It may appear that they formed the general opinion, as they were the most outspoken and active agents, but by numbers, they were a minority voice among them. The reason for this seems to be that the majority didn't wish to address their background or stand out.

It was believed that Scandinavia was an exceptionally good place for them to arrive to as we could care for them and regarded ourselves as being particularly tolerant and non-oppressive. Yet, it seems that many, when reaching adulthood and moving away from their protective environments, having grown up with their adoptive parents, often in small, provincial communities, forced them to face with society's expectations and sometimes prejudices as well as their own feelings of detachment and displacement.

Many questions remain un-resolved. However, we can rely on the increasing adoption research that took place in Sweden since around the mid 1990s, which was based on national cohort studies of thousands of adult international adoptees.

Here, indications were that international adoption was not as unproblematic and idyllic as it was generally perceived to be.

These Swedish adoption studies, by far the most extensive ever conducted on international adoptees in any Western country, can also be seen as the most scientific ones up to date of assessing the outcomes of international adoption.

The results show that international adoptees in Sweden compared to equivalent control groups have substantial problems establishing themselves socio-economically in terms of:

- Level of education,
- Labor market achievement
- Creating a family in spite of being adopted by couples predominantly belonging to the Swedish elite*

*It is estimated that 90 percent of the adoptive parents belong to Sweden's upper and middle classes

Examples of socio-economic status of international adoptees compared to Ethnic Swedes

	International Adoptees	Ethnic Swedes
Post-secondary education of three years	6.6 %	20.0 %
Unemployment	39.8 %	22.9 %
Belonging to the lowest income category in Sweden	50.0 %	28.6 %
Married or co-habitants	29.2 %	56.2 %

International adoptees less often had children, and those who became parents were more often living without their children if they were males, or as single parents if they were females.

Furthermore, epidemiological studies show high levels of psychiatric illness, addiction, criminality and suicide compared to the control groups

For the years 1986-95, the odds ratio for: Psychiatric hospital care 3.2 times higher than Ethnic Swedes

Treatment for alcohol abuse 2.6 times higher than Ethnic Swedes

Drug abuse 5.2 times higher than Ethnic Swedes
Severe criminality leading to imprisonment 2.6 times higher than Ethnic Swedes

Suicide attempt: 3.6. times higher than Ethnic Swede

*Suicide: 5.0 times higher than ethnic Swedes

*Moreover, international adoptees were found to have used more violent suicide methods compared to the majority population of Sweden.

In an international perspective, this is only comparable to the staggering suicide rates registered among indigenous people in America and Australia with, for example, a suicide rate exceeding the national rate by four times for American Indian children adopted into white families.

Source: Hjern, 2004; Hjern & Allebeck, 2004; Hjern, Lindblad & Vinnerljung, 2003; Hjern, Vinnerljung & Lindblad, 2004

Imaginaries

Regarding their personal lives and thoughts there were of course large individual variations so we can only guess. This reconstructed room contains the basic interior of their style of living, original photos and personal documents and memoirs that they seemed to value and identify with.

In general, they integrated unusually well. In many cases, only their skin revealed their origin as everything from their names, citizenships, adoptive families, religion, culture, language, and even gestures and opinions were completely Scandinavian. Sometimes they even seemed to misunderstand or repress the fact that they were not Scandinavian by origin.

10) The mythological context:

The Korean creation myth and how the Bear cult links the Northern Polar Hemisphere.



11) A Historical Parallel about displacement. The story about Minik, an Eskimo transported from Greenland to be displayed at an exhibition at the Museum of Natural History in New York and later adopted.



Not only to us, do they appear mythical, as they entered in and out of our culture, with us hardly noticing their differences, yet leaving numerous traces about their presence.

Also, it seems, they created a lot of personal histories and mythologies around their lives in their attempt to create a sense of continuity and place.

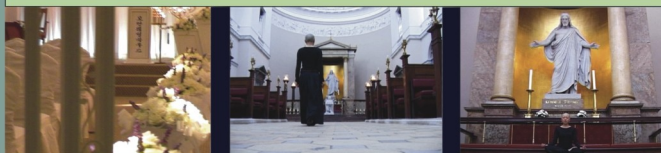
9) The personal story

An example of their imaginaries and how they often compared and related their personal stories to myths and fairytales as to fill in the gaps in their histories.



... using a combination of Judith Butler's performativity theory and Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity as the theoretical background, the paper argues that the adopted Korean existence is characterized by painful and contradictory subjectivities and identifications, unstable and repeated passings and transgressions, and a never-ending negotiation and navigation between Whiteness, Orientalism, Immigrantism, Koreanness and Asianness making it different from other Korean and Asian immigrant and minority diasporas and communities, and being in no way neither self-chosen nor very pleasant to live in, thereby also going against the general celebratory hype of performativity and hybridity in postmodern writing.

Source: Tobias Hübinette "Disembodied and free-floating bodies out-of-place and out-of-control: Examining the borderline existence of adopted Koreans"



Spoken for and speaking

Up until the late 1990s, adoption agencies, social workers, psychologists, and adoptive parents wrote most of the records we have about them. Since then, with the establishment of organizations and especially the Internet as a resource for gaining knowledge and enabling meetings across geographical boundaries, there was a veritable explosion of cultural and autobiographical works written and produced by themselves.

Ranging from novels, poems and art works, to documentaries and films, the adopted Koreans were here for the first time considered active agents capable of creating their own social spaces and expressing their own authentic voices instead of just being valuable commodities of Korea's adoption program, grateful and privileged children of Western elite families or idealized and perfectly assimilated adoptees in academic research.



Organization and self-definition

Since the end of the 1980s they began to organize themselves through associations and organizations. These organizations functioned both as meeting points and gatherings with social and cultural activities, language classes, and group tours back to Korea.

As most of them had lived their entire lives in Scandinavian families, these meetings often marked a first re-encounter with their origin, and for many, a great step into a self-definition as being something more / other than pure Scandinavians.



Route from a Swedish Korean adoptee scholar

"To apply postcolonial theory when studying international adoption from Korea may appear reasonable given the many aspects of coloniality involved in the setting; Korea's semi-colonial status from the end of the 19th century and nearly half a century as a former Japanese colony, likewise the country's half a century old subordinate position within the present day American Empire, international adoption as a colonial-style trade and trafficking in human commodities, and finally the adopted Koreans as subaltern subjects. Having a postcolonial perspective is according to me therefore arguably a useful approach to the Korean adoption issue.

My use of postcolonial theory is driven by the conviction that colonialism cannot be limited just to direct territorial control belonging to the classical imperialist period, but must be seen as the still existing relationship between the West and the non-West in terms of economic, political, social, linguistic and cultural dependence, domination and subordination not to mention the moral and ethical aspects. Anne McClintock (1992), Ella Shohat (1992) and Stuart Hall (1996a) have all three also questioned the very concept of postcoloniality and its disorienting association as an infinite aftermath. For them, the term has become a mere substitute for the "Third World", celebrates colonialism as what brought historical time to non-Western societies, gives the false idea of colonisation as a once-and-for-all and before/after process, reinstates the coloniser's privilege to de-fine the state of the world and, above all, obscures the ever-present colonial projects of the West, which are still going strong. I regard international adoption to be one of these contemporary colonial projects. Together with other critical postcolonial and feminist writers on international adoption, I consider the involuntary transferral of hundreds of thousands of non-Western children on a worldwide scale after formal decolonisation as a clear reflection of a global colonial reality and racial hierarchy, and a grim reminder of the still existing astronomical power imbalance between the West and its former colonies".

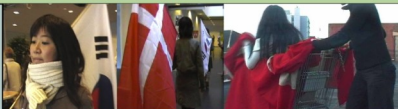
A first hand experience from a Korean adoptee

"I went to my first meeting in Koreaklubben* last year when I was 24. It was an introduction to the association and I became interested because they held information meetings about tours to Korea. When I entered the room, I was shocked to see so many Korean people. I thought to myself; 'I don't fit in here at all!'"

Then I understood that they were all Danish Korean adoptees like myself. I think that was the first time I really understood that I looked Korean and that other people must have viewed me like just another person in the crowd.

That was both a very, very scary and very happy moment that somehow changed my life. Scary because I had to confront myself with my physical appearance. No matter how much I had tried to fit into Danish society, my face would somehow always betray me and label me as a foreigner. Happy because for the first time in my life, I met other people with whom I could share my thoughts about Korea and identity as adoptee".

*Danish adoptee association for Korean adoptees.



Several Internet based groups point to the fact that the adopted Korean movement was very much a virtual community. Like many other marginalized groups, they benefited greatly from the coming of the Internet. The most important international networking was the holding of three subsequent International Gatherings, first in Washington D.C. 1999, then in Oslo, Norway 2001, and in Seoul, South Korea 2004.

"A growing number of adopted Koreans resettled in Korea and created their own groups. This ethnogenesis of an adopted Korean community with its extremely heterogeneous and diverse and completely de-territorialized character took place in the interstitial space between the birth country's nationalist vision of a global Korean community where the adoptees were automatically essentialized as Korean brethren and expected to reconnect with the "Motherland", and an arrogant Western culture demanding colonial subordination, complete assimilation and absolute loyalty".



NO GRATITUDE

7) Represented

-A private recording about their opinions on how they were viewed and portrayed by us, especially in popular culture and in commercial products.

8) Speaking back

This recording is a conversation about their political activism and their thoughts about how they viewed their current lives and futures.



"24 Hours in the Yellow Zone project"

Seoul, South Korea, October 2005.
10 Adopted Korean-Europeans and Korean-Americans, 1.5 Generation and 2nd generation Korean-Americans spent 24 Hours in Koroot Guesthouse, performing and discussing issues of decolonization, transracial identity, Diaspora, and healing.

A transnational movement

Groups of artists, activists, and theorists emerged in Europe, the United States and in South Korea. They criticized the underlying power structures involved in International adoption and promoted domestic adoption in South Korea. Groups like Scandinavian founded UFOlab, Adoptee Solidarity Korea, and Orientality Exhibition emerged, addressing not only adoption, but also issues of race, representation, and Diaspora.



"Adoption Action Day"

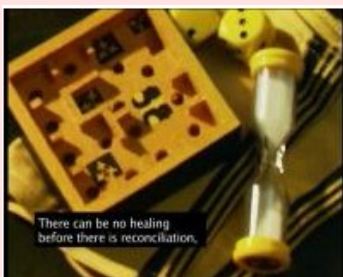
A group of artists and activists went to the four adoption agencies in South Korea and the Parliament, each holding a sign with their adoption number. Nathalie Mihee Lemoine, Kate Hers, Adel Gouillon, Trine Meesook Glerup, Jane Jin Kaisen



UFOlab, Copenhagen, Denmark 2005.

...FURTHER VIEWING

- **Audio Tour**. Here is the link to the audio tours that relate to the pannels shown previously.
<http://www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org/files/grid/a3.htm#tracing>
- **Adopting Belinda**. Jane Jin Kaisen and Tobias Hübinette. 2006. 8.35 mins. Adopting Belinda is a mock-documentary in which a supposedly Asian-American couple in Minnesota are being interviewed by a Danish TV host for a series on Danish heritage. They talk about their experience, having just adopted a child from another country. The only unusual factor is that the adoptive parents are of Korean decent and the child is a Caucasian girl from Denmark.
- **Tracing Trades**. Jane Jin Kaisen and Tobias Hübinette. 2006. 38 mins. The film takes shape as an investigation of a trace: A Peter Paul Rubens drawing of a Korean man, who may have been the first Korean slave and adoptee to set foot on European ground. This leads to a critical revision of the history of international adoption as a postcolonial and humanistic welfare phenomena. The adoption traffic is put in relation to a larger narrative of migration, culture import, and human trafficking. These traces lead to a recount of Nordic colonialism, Orientalism, and the cultivation of exotic, foreign people exhibited in Tivoli and in Zoos. The revision of these photographic evidences of Danish nation building leads to a struggle about history and the right to reinterpret parts of the National history.



...FURTHER READING

- Hübinette, T. 2004. To be a white Swede, an Oriental stereotype, a non-Western immigrant, an Asian tourist and an ethnic Korean. Some notes on the infelicitous performative of adopted Koreans. *Uri Shinmun* no. 4 (vol. 14), pp. 45-49.
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- Hübinette, T. 2009. On being Swedish and not being white: Conversations with adoptees and adoptive parents on everyday racism in Sweden/Paekini anin Sûoêdêninûro sanûn kôt Sûoêdênûi ilsangjôk injongch'abyôlê taehan ibyangin, ibyang pumowoaûi taehwa, *Journal of Korean Adoption Studies* no. 1 (vol. 1), pp. 51-77/78-97.
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- Hübinette, T and Tigervall, C. 2009. When racism becomes individualised: Experiences of racialisation among adult adoptees and adoptive parents of Sweden in Suvi Keskinen, Salla Tuori, Sari Irni & Diana Mulinari (ed.), *Complying with colonialism: Gender, race and ethnicity in the Nordic region*. Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 119-135.
- Hübinette, T. and Tigervall, C. 2010. Adoption with complications: Conversations with adoptees and adoptive parents on everyday racism and ethnic identity, *International Social Work* no. 4 (vol. 53), pp. 489-509.

LINKS

Web pages from:

[Tobias Hübinette](#)

[Jane Jin Kaisen](#)

RECENT EVENTS

FROM DE EVIDENCE TO THE NARRATIVE IN THE SANITARY CARE: Bipower and narratives of affliction
X REDAM Conference (RED Medical Anthropology) Tarragona, 7-8 June, 2010

The annual conference of the University Rovira i Virgili with the purpose to bring up alternatives from the anthropology of health to the hegemonic biomedical speak, discusses the paradigm of the medicine based in the evidence (MBE) with an emergent medicine based in the narrative, alternative and complementary. Composed by two conferences, 8 tables of 4-6 papers about:

Discussing evidences: suffering and bipower, professional narratives and management of the suffering, time and narrative in the experience of the illness, narrated body and bipower, figuring the suffering.

And the ending in charge of Radio Nikosia, alternative argument to the power.

The rationalization of the MBE allows to unify criteria based on the disappearing of the individual. A more humanised rationality is necessary, that includes the patient's discussion. The hearing is built from the knowledge. The cultural constructions of masculinity/femininity appear, the predominance of the masculine speak, in the subjective living of the body, that makes itself visible in non-legitimated illnesses for being 'in feminine' (fibromalgie) . Other models are also needed in the management of the suffering in fertility, in front of the breakage of corporal spiritual continuity that biological paternity/maternity represent, that allow its symbolic remake and its remeaning to the social kinship, alternative to the legitimated way for the medical knowledge, being the assisted reproduction.

It is highlighted the importance to add to the medical knowledge the knowledge received by the patient's narrative, its subjectivity, heterogeneity, the social dimension, and the knowledge that comes from the alternative medicines, that allows them to participate in an active way, keeping the connexion with themselves and their own body.

FUTURE EVENTS

- The IV World Congress on Child and Adolescent Rights Puerto Rico, November 15 -18, 2010
- Futures in the making - youth, conflict and potentiality Copenhagen, January 20-21, 2011
- 2011 Meeting of the Society for Cross Cultural Research. Done by both the Society for Anthropological Sciences and the American Anthropological Association's Anthropology of Children and Childhood Interest Group Charleston, South Carolina. February 16-19, 2011.
- Workshop. The Costs of Children Oslo, Norway, 24-25 February 2011
- 2011 ACP - The Asian Conference on Psychology and the Behavioral Sciences 2011. Topic of the Conference: "Brave New World: Caring Sharing and Understanding". Osaka, Japan. March 20-22, 2011.
- Quality in Alternative Care, International Conference Prague, 4-6 April, 2011.
- Early Childhood in Developing World Contexts International Conference University College Cork, Ireland. April 7th - 8th 2011.
- New Worlds of Adoption: Research-Based Interventions Promoting Attachment. Campus Center Hotel, University of Massachusetts Amherst. April 8, 2011.
- Association of American Geographers, Annual Meeting 2011. Topic of the Meeting "Geographies of Youth, Gender and Ethnicity" Seattle, April 12th-16th, 2011.
- The second international conference for Psychosocial Perspectives on Quasi-coercive Treatment of Offenders Timisoara, Romania, May 5-7, 2011.
- 1st Global Conference. Queer Sexualities. Warsaw, Poland, May 13th to 15th, 2011.
- Multiple Childhoods/Multidisciplinary Perspectives Rutgers University, Camden, NJ, USA, May 20-21, 2011.
- Social Protection in Southern Africa: New Opportunities for Social Development. University of Johannesburg, 25 - 26 May, 2011.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jane Jin Kaisen

is a visual artist and activist working in an interdisciplinary manner with video, performance, text, and photography. In an attempt to deconstruct narration, reading, and representation, she uses reversed strategies and multilayered approaches in her use of language and medium. She is part of Chamber of Public Secrets, a mobile art apparatus, which produces video documentaries/broadcasting for the Copenhagen-based tv-tv and has recently organized *Made In Video: International Video Art Festival on Public Secrets and Visual Representation* in Copenhagen, 2006. She was co-curator of *International Adoptee Gathering Exhibition* (Seoul, South Korea, 2004), co-founder of UFO-lab (Unidentified Foreign Object Laboratory), a Scandinavian-based artist/activist group working with postcolonial and feminist theory for international adoptees' rights through seminars, exhibitions, city interventions, and writing. Kaisen is also part of the exhibition collective *Orientality of Diaspora Korean Artists*, which exhibits and lectures on trans-experience.

Tobias Hübinette (Korean name Lee Sam-dol)

is a Lecturer and Researcher in contemporary Korean culture and society. His Ph.D. dissertation in Korean Studies, *Comforting an Orphaned Nation*, examines international adoption from Korea, the Korean adoption issue, and representations of adopted Koreans in Korean media and popular culture. He has lectured, published books and articles, and made research on Nazism and racism in the Scandinavian countries. In addition, he writes in Swedish, Korean, and international newspapers and journals on issues concerning (post)colonialism in a Nordic context and setting, and on international adoption and international adoptees in general. Other interests are Swedish and Western images and representations of Korea and East Asians, problems regarding Orientalism and Asianists, and marginalized postcolonial Diasporas and ethnic minorities.