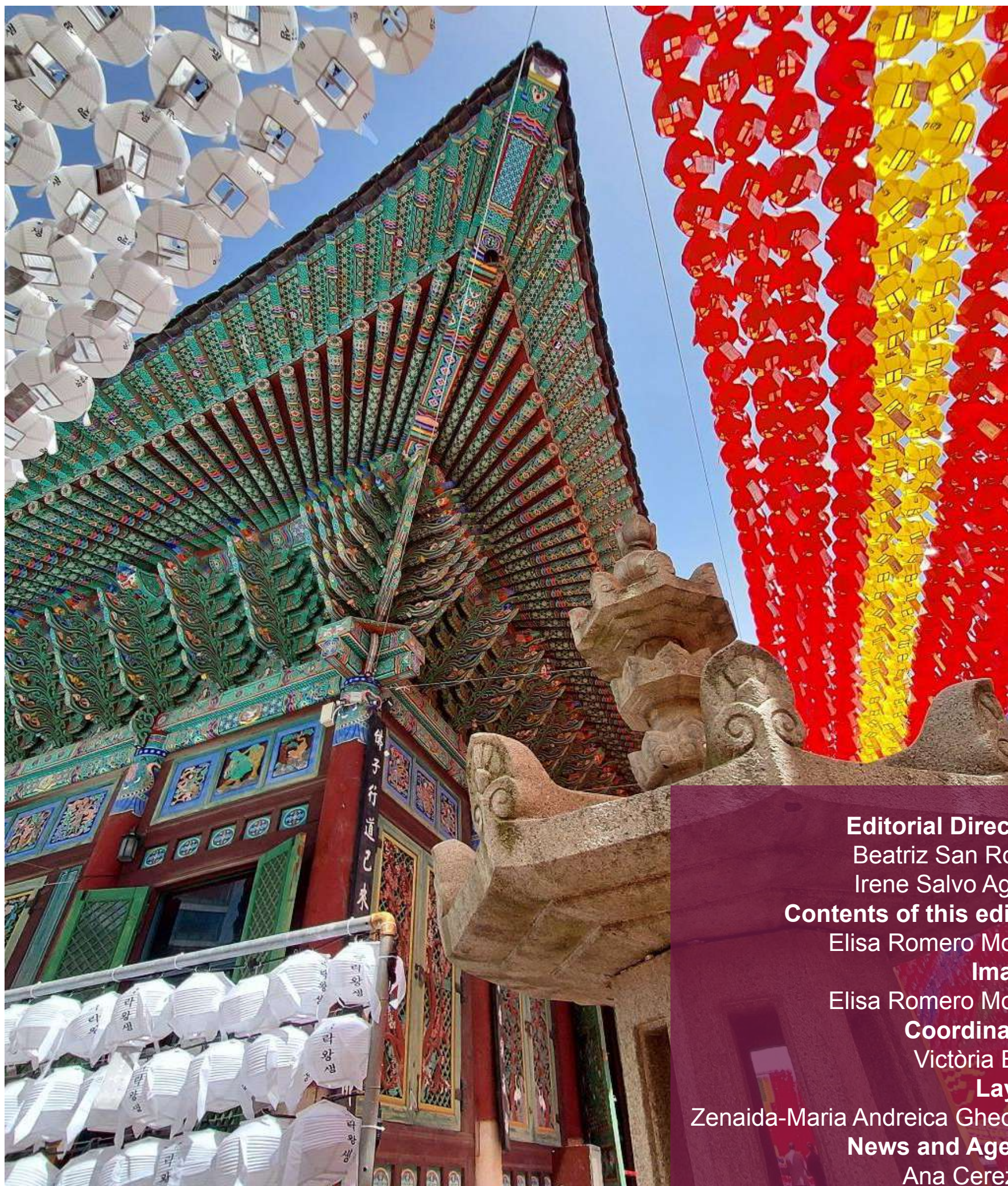


25 years of 'public adoption' in South Korea: transformations and contradictions



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Introduction

In Spain, the combination of the concepts ‘adoption’ and ‘Asia’ generally evokes the image of hundreds of children of Chinese and Vietnamese origin, among others, who began to arrive in our country from the 1990s onwards. However, very little is known about the country that many experts consider to be a pioneer in the phenomenon of international adoptions: South Korea (hereinafter, Korea). To give an idea of its magnitude, official sources estimate that, since the 1950s, around 220,000 children have been sent to other countries, while another 80,000 have been circulated internally. However, some groups that defend the rights of adoptees, such as TRACK (Truth and Reconciliation for the Adoption Community of Korea) and KoRoot (La Casa de las Raíces), consider these figures to be very conservative, as they do not include the thousands of children who were adopted using falsified documents.

Outside Korea, and even within the country itself, the phenomenon of national adoption is even less well known. The year 2024 marked the 25th anniversary of the emergence of the particular concept of ‘public adoption’ (*gonggaeibyang*). Conceived as the ‘Koreanisation of Western open adoption’, this practice has simultaneously contributed, over the last few decades, both to a greater

social acceptance of adoptive families in society and to generating various processes of exclusion and stratification within the adoptive communities themselves.



Figure 1: Cherry blossom tree in Sinchon, Seoul (2023)

The reflections on this process that I present in this publication are based on the research I carried out as part of my doctoral thesis at the Seoul National University in Korea. The objective of my thesis was, in general terms, to analyse the impact that the controversial 2012 Adoption Act had on various actors in the field of adoption, especially in the field of national adoption. This introduced unprecedented changes,

both conceptual and administrative, with regard to the management and operation of adoptions in the country. During the preparation of my thesis, I carried out fieldwork between August 2019 and November 2020 in the so-called ‘Seoul metropolitan area’ (which includes the city of Seoul and several neighbouring municipalities in Gyeonggi province and the city of Incheon), including in-depth interviews with 43 adult adoptees, adoptive parents, adoption professionals and experts, single mothers, as well as activists.



Figure 2: Street art in Hongdae, Seoul (2023)

Brief history of adoption in Korea

To understand the current situation of domestic adoptions in Korea, it is necessary to briefly present its history. This country was devastated after the Korean War (1950-1953), a conflict between the southern and northern parts, which led to its division. To take care of the tens of thousands of war orphans and children abandoned due to the poverty that devastated their families, the South Korean authorities relied completely on the military force and the charities that arrived first from the United States and then from Europe. In this context, international adoption was constructed as a win-win solution, that is to say, a strategy in which, apparently, all parties emerged as winners. The South Korean authorities saw their social spending reduced and were able to focus on the economic and industrial development of the country, while the United States and other European countries in need of babies could easily obtain them through the new routes established with the Asian country.

From the end of the 1950s and throughout the following decades, an entire ‘adoption industry’ was built in Korea, as it has been called by several critical voices. A dense network of private centres (including orphanages, maternity hospitals, residential centres,

hospitals, etc.) was established throughout the country, with the aim of systematically making profits through the acquisition and circulation of children. These children came, in the vast majority of cases, from vulnerable women and families. In turn, this industry was run by four large adoption agencies, three of which are still active: Holt, Eastern Social Welfare and Korean Social Welfare.

It should be noted that the highest number of adoptions took place in the 1980s, when South Korea had not only managed to recover from the devastation of the war, but also positioned itself as one of the world's leading economic powers. However, the 1988 Seoul Olympics attracted a lot of attention and people began to wonder why such a prosperous country was still facilitating and benefiting from thousands of adoptions. Since then, the numbers have declined, but they are still high in comparison with other countries.

The secrecy surrounding domestic adoptions

Something that is often ignored about the Korean 'adoption industry' is that it developed in parallel to international and domestic adoptions. Both the children circulating within the country and those sent abroad came from the same 'sources'. In the beginning, they were war orphans or abandoned

children. Later, they came from poor families in general. Since the 1980s, the children most often considered 'adoptable' have been the daughters and sons of single mothers (*mihonmo*), a complex category that encompasses a wide variety of social realities. On the other hand, while the phenomenon of international adoptions has attracted a lot of attention, national adoption is still shrouded in ignorance.

A defining characteristic of modern domestic adoption in Korea has been its secrecy and stigmatisation. Until the 20th century, following Confucian principles of kinship, adoptions took

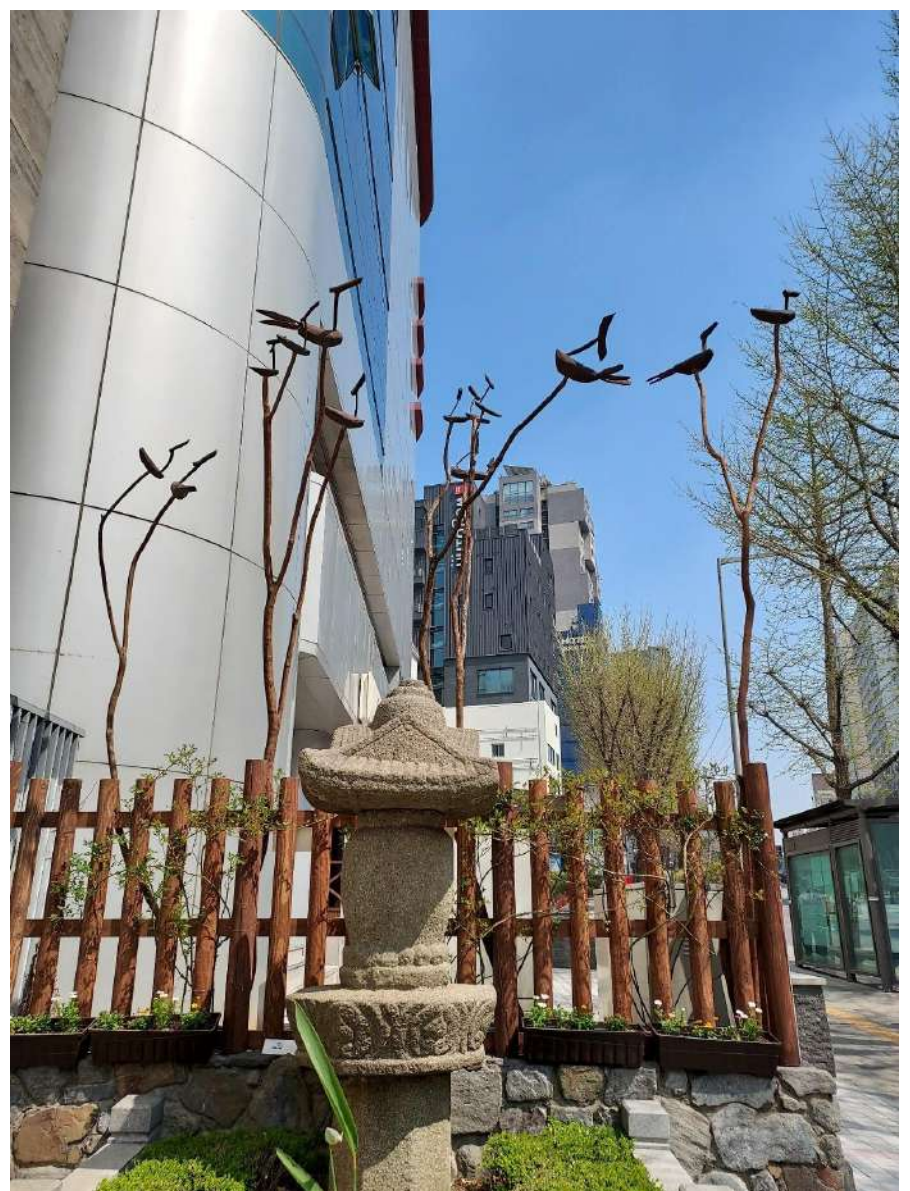


Figure 3: *Sotdae* on a street in Idae, Seoul (2023)



Figure 4: Sunset Gwanak, Seoul (2018)

place within so-called ‘extended lineages’, family branches united by a common ancestor. According to these values, blood and the continuation of the paternal line of succession were the only elements that marked belonging to a family. However, when modern adoptions began to take place outside these lineages, they lost that blood bond component, and these ties began to be considered illegitimate. In addition, after the Korean War, the association between poverty and adoption further permeated this concept of negativity. Finally, in recent decades, the stigmatisation of single mothers contributed to deepening this change in perception.

As a result, domestic adoptions began to be carried out in an increasingly

secretive manner. In fact, secret adoptions (*bimilibyang*) were the norm in Korea until just over a decade ago.

Somewhat surprisingly, but making sense in this context, for many years adoption agencies encouraged birth mothers who wanted to be reunited with their children in the future to give them up for adoption abroad. If the child remained in Korea, the agencies argued that the secrecy that prevails in national adoption would make future searches or meetings impossible.

From secrecy to public: *gonggaeibyang*

In this context of secrecy, the figure of so-called ‘public adoption’ emerged in the late 1990s. Korea had begun to

open up to new ideas, ways of life and different religious and moral values. In this sense, the rise of international adoptions in North America and Europe was key for this country. In those countries, adoption was not only celebrated as a legitimate way of forming a family, but was also associated with values such as solidarity or even sophistication. In addition, the growing influence of Christianity in Korea (mainly Protestant) called into question Confucian principles of kinship. These changes helped to minimise the value of blood and lineage as the only synonyms for 'family', replacing them with elements such as love, education and will.

In 1999, an association of adoptive parents called Mission to Promote Adoption in Korea (MPAK, *Hanguibyongbohwe*) was founded. This group was originally set up in the United States by Steve Morrison, an adopted man of South Korean origin. He and Ha Yeonhui, an adoptive mother, continued with the Korean branch of MPAK. From the beginning, this association played a key role in the fight against the negative stereotypes and the secrecy surrounding national adoptions. Although the practice of public adoption goes beyond the role of MPAK (most of the families that practice it are not members of this organisation), this association undoubtedly became its most recognisable face. It was they who began to work to make these families

visible, to claim the legitimacy of adoption and to encourage other citizens to adopt.

Over time, other groups have joined MPAK, forming what could be called a 'broader movement for the promotion and revitalisation of adoption'. Based on the testimonies and language of the people I interviewed, this movement argues that adoption should be celebrated and promoted as the best way to provide a vulnerable child with a family that wants to give them love. The strategy that MPAK began to employ was to construct a new image and concept around adoption that emphasised the most positive elements of adoption and even turned it into a beautiful and praiseworthy lifestyle.



Figure 5: Ginkgo at Changgyeong Palace, Seoul (2024)

Since then, phrases such as ‘adoption is love’ or ‘children of the heart’ have become mantras of this movement. Furthermore, MPAK was established on Christian values that reinforce these messages through notions such as ‘we are all children of God’ and ‘we were all made in his image and likeness’. On the other hand, they extol the synonymy between ‘adopted’ and ‘child’, or even ‘baby’. With all this, they reinforce another of their central objectives: to reduce the number of institutionalised children and promote their upbringing in adoptive families. Families, of course, that reproduce the hegemonic moral canons, framed within the margins of heteronormativity and marriage.

In short, this group has focused its

mission on ‘promoting adoption’, advocating for a very specific model: ‘public adoption’. As many of the interviewees explained to me, this is the ‘Koreanised version’ of the Western practice of ‘open adoption’ (*gaebangibyang*). Open adoption involves (at least in theory) the establishment of some kind of relationship between the three parties involved in the so-called ‘adoption triad’: the adopted person, the biological family and the adoptive family. The extent of the relationships established in these adoptions varies enormously. Although most adoptive families aspire to integrate the biological family into their lives in some way, from the perspective of Korean public adoption, this is not desirable.

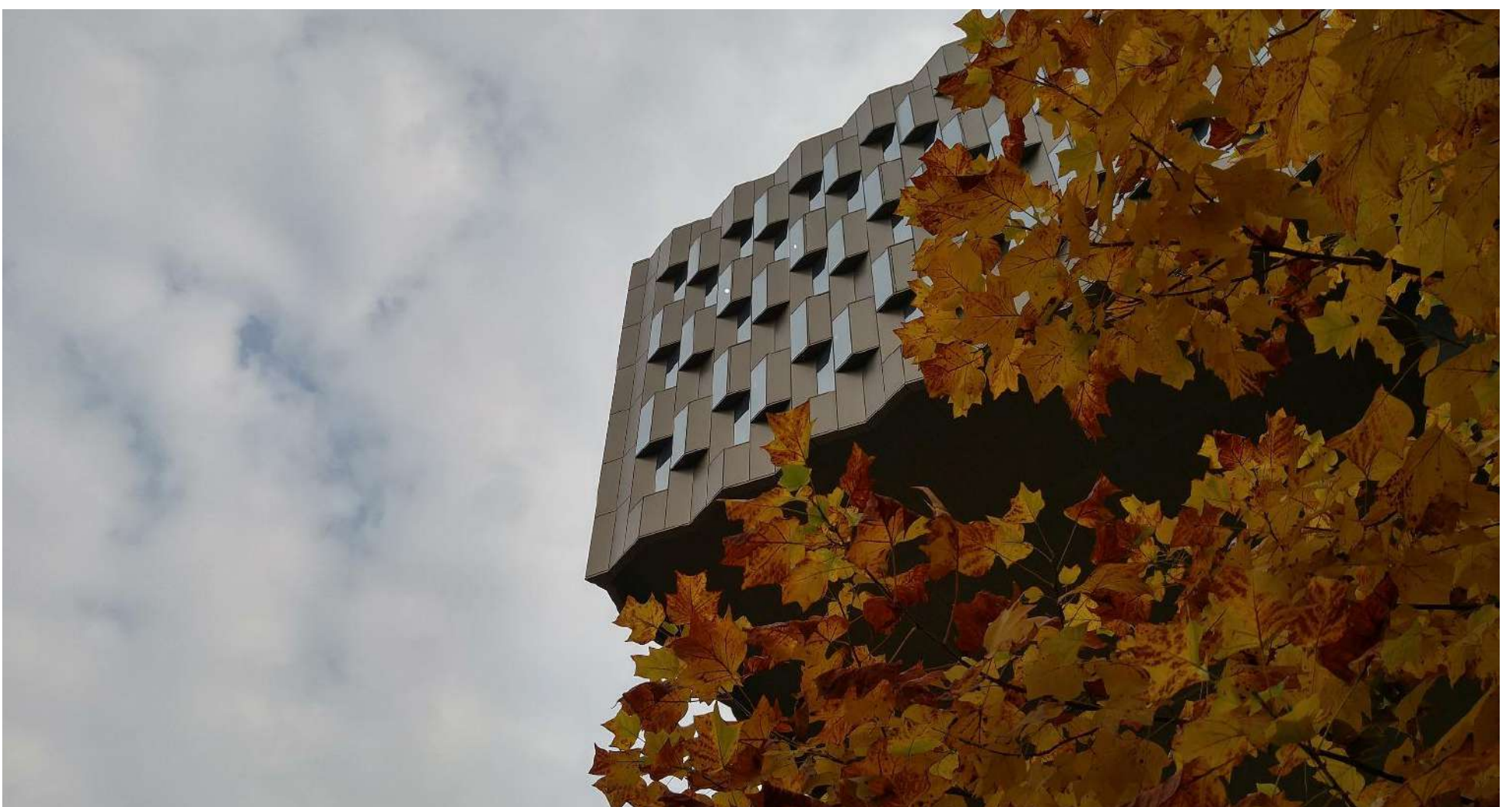


Figure 6: Seoul National University Library (2017)

On the contrary, the connection with the birth families is often erased and the definition of ‘openness’ is limited solely to revealing the ‘truth of the adoption’ (*ibyangui jinsil*) to the adopted person and to other important people in their environment, usually the extended family and close friends. Hyorin, a veteran adoption agency worker, explains it this way:

It's not like we just turned up one day and said, ‘Let's do an open adoption!’ We did it the Korean way. That's why we use the expression ‘public adoption’ (...).



Figure 7: Restaurant in Bukchon, Seoul (2024)

Open adoption in the United States includes the whole triangle, but we eliminate the biological family, we inform them of the truth of the adoption and the child grows up knowing this adoptive truth. That is what we consider our public adoption. We cannot do the other.

This raises the question of why this refusal to integrate the biological family. As I mentioned earlier, in Korea the high level of stigmatisation of single mothers led MPAK to reconfigure the concept of ‘openness’ to bring it more into line with Korean morality. To do this, it is key to understand the social construction of these mothers. As in other societies, in Korea women who have children out of wedlock are considered a threat to moral order and social harmony. Furthermore, under the influence of Confucianism, compliance with norms is highly valued and those who challenge them are punished. Likewise, after the Korean War, single mothers were discredited as the epitome of poverty and ignorance, and even as potential propagators of communist ideology. This characterisation has served the adoption authorities to justify intense control over these women's bodies and their reproduction, as well as over the circulation of their children to families considered ‘worthy’ and ‘normal’.

Multiple meanings behind public adoption

Before continuing with the characterisation of public adoption, a term that may sound somewhat strange in English, it is interesting to pause briefly on its etymology. In Korean, this word also has an ambiguous meaning. *Gonggae* can be translated as both ‘open’ and ‘public’. However, the term *gaebang* can also be translated as ‘open’. Therefore, in my research I decided to use the word ‘public’ to avoid confusion with the more Western concept of ‘open adoption’. Having made this clarification, it should be noted that the limits of ‘going public with the adoption’ vary greatly in practice. During my fieldwork I came across adoptive families who had no problem at all in sharing with anyone that their child had been adopted. However, most were somewhere in between, weighing the pros and cons of going public. In this sense, school seemed to be the most difficult environment in which to make a decision. Many feared that, if they told the school staff, the difference between their children and the rest of the students would be overly emphasised. A curious testimony in this regard is that of Naeun, an adoptive mother who reflected on the possible discrimination against her son:

I thought about telling the principal, but then I decided it wasn't necessary. I don't know, I

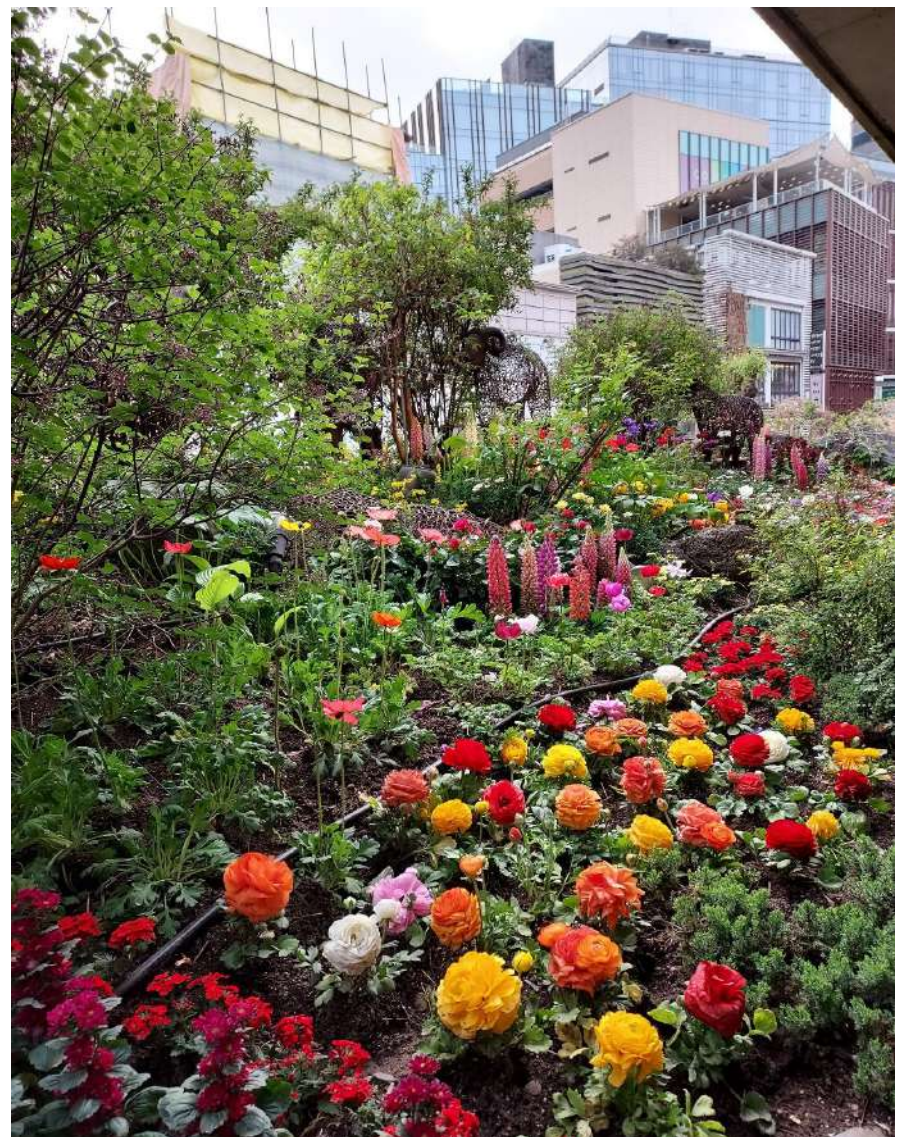


Figure 8: Corner in Mangwon, Seoul (2016)

have a lot of doubts. Maybe if I tell him, everyone will end up finding out. (...) It's the same as with the type of apartment you live in, which is very important. Depending on where a child lives, a principal can even discriminate against them. I don't know, I'm very worried.

Some people I interviewed argued that ‘Western’ open adoption confuses and greatly harms children, as it blurs who their ‘mum’ or ‘dad’ is. Others were even convinced that biological families always have bad intentions, with the aim of benefiting financially from the children they once ‘abandoned’ and who now live happily with these honest families.

However, my reading of this stance and that of my research participants is that many adoptive parents find it difficult to accept the possibility of multiple parental figures in their children's history.

Moreover, there was evidence of great insecurity regarding their social perception as 'normal' families, and some even admitted to being afraid of being 'replaced' by the biological families.

In any case, it is undeniable that, over the years, MPAK has played a key role in reducing the burden of secrecy

surrounding domestic adoptions, as well as improving their public acceptance. Daeseong, an adoptive parent, put it this way:

Let's say that, at the beginning, we would have chosen to do a non-public adoption (*bigonggaeibyang*). Then, when we went to the adoption meetings, when we met with friends, we had to do everything in secret (...) But if you choose to do it openly, you can also meet openly with friends, with family,



Figure 9: Commercial Center in Sinsa, Seoul (2017)

with people in your community, with acquaintances, because everyone knows. That's why we joined MPAK, so we can talk to other people [like us] and learn from them. Because there is also information there [at the meetings organised by MPAK]. And then, when our daughter grows up (...) you can also learn to deal with those things, like 'you should do this, this and this'.

In line with this logic, adoption agencies have strongly supported this model of public adoptions from the beginning, while discouraging open adoptions. Similarly, public authorities, which since the 2012 legal reform have been progressively gaining more weight in the management of adoptions, also support public adoption as a model to be followed, actively promoting it.



Figure 10: Sculpture in the Forest Park in Seoul (2023)

Reflections after 25 years of public adoption in Korea

The results presented so far reflect the undeniable role of MPAK and the adoption promotion movement in the acceptance of this type of family and of the adopted people themselves in Korea, as well as in the fight against the secrecy and prejudice that surrounded it for decades. However, over the last twenty-five years, this movement and the very idea of public adoption as the epitome of 'the right thing to do' have become a hegemonic model which, instead of tending towards greater openness, has been oppressing and silencing other ways of practising adoption. In this sense, after finishing my doctoral research, I have found that several trends that I observed during my fieldwork have not only continued, but are intensifying and even radicalising.

Firstly, representatives of the public adoption movement have set themselves up as the monolithic representatives of *all* adoptive families. However, in my research I discovered that the 2012 Adoption Act, which the movement criticises harshly, actually opened the door to a diversification of ways of understanding and practising adoption. In recent years, more voices have been consolidated that not only defend other models of adoption, but also seek to participate more actively in decision-making on child protection, adoptions, gender and family policies. On

the one hand, more and more adopted adults are claiming their right to speak for themselves and not, as has been the case until now, through their adoptive parents or professionals. On the other hand, although they are still in the minority, there are more and more adoptive families who are trying to carry out open adoptions in which, in one way or another, they diversify and complicate the parental figures and the ways of forming a family. In addition, the number of single mothers and fathers is growing in Korea, and they are increasingly demanding more respect for their right to be able to raise their children alone. However, representatives of the public adoption movement continue to insist that this is the ideal model and practically the only one that deserves support.

Secondly, in the results shared above, I emphasised that a key strategy of the public adoption movement was the creation of an idyllic image of adoption as a source of happiness for families and hope for vulnerable children. As a result, a new category of adoptees has emerged and is increasingly being exploited politically: the so-called ‘first generation of public adoptees’ (*gonggaeibyangin ilsedae*). In many of the interviews I conducted, as well as in the press releases I analysed, this ‘first generation’ is characterised as a group of fortunate young people, whom adoption has given a second chance in life. These stories convey the idea that these children have been raised ‘in the right way’, thanks to



Figure 11: Resting place on a street in Hongdae, Seoul (2023)

the love of their adoptive parents. This characterisation implicitly includes another set of duties and attitudes towards these adopted people. As a form of retribution and gratitude for what adoption and their adoptive families have given them, there is the underlying idea that they should defend the benefits of this way of building a family, that they should feel lucky and grateful for the new life they have been given, and that they should always speak about it positively. Because they are still very young, this approach continues and they are not in a position to represent themselves. Consequently, this means that, once again, it is the adoptive mothers and fathers and the adoption professionals who speak and decide for the adopted persons.

This idealised discourse of the first generation of people adopted through ‘public adoption’ is used to contrast other voices that challenge this sweetened and perfect image of adoption. In this sense, during my research I met several members of the pioneering association Domestic Adopted Solidarity (DAS, *gugnaeibyanginyeondae*) in Korea, which represents the first ‘independent’ association of adopted adults at the national level. Although their main objective has been to create meeting places for adoptees at a national level, they soon began to take a stand in defence of their rights and those of single mothers, with the aim of demanding adoption processes with greater guarantees and claiming greater control over adoption agencies. For all these reasons, representatives of the adoption

promotion movement have categorised this group and its supporters as quasi-‘enemies’ and ‘anti-adoption’ people, which has generated great tension between the two groups. They argue that, because people adopted through ‘non-public’ adoptions live under the oppression of secret adoption, once they learn their ‘adoptive truth’, they experience great resentment towards adoption and their adoptive families. On the other hand, they are accused of representing ‘a minority of discordant and resentful voices’, as opposed to a majority of happy and satisfied public adoptees. Undoubtedly, the ‘accusation’ of being a ‘minority’ seems meaningless, since, in comparison, the number of ‘publicly’ adopted people is much lower than that of those adopted in secret. As an example of one of the consequences of the discursive



Figure 12: Vases (hangari) in Bukchon, Seoul (2023)

struggles between these groups, I present a revealing fragment of one of my conversations with Eunji, a Korean woman who was adopted nationally and a member of DAS, who lamented the difficulties they encountered when creating this association:

At first, we wanted to meet and talk to some of the public adoption associations. That's why we met [with them] last year. (...) We talked, but two of them said to us: 'Oh, are you trying to start a political movement or something?' We said no, we wanted to create a space where we could talk about our difficulties, where we could have a good time. But they said they couldn't help or support us. One of those people, very authoritarian, said to us: 'your

orientation has nothing to do with us' (...) How can I put it? It was as if they were getting defensive? (...) We felt as if they were saying to us: 'You are going to speak ill of adoption, you are going to say bad things' (...) And it was as if they were saying to us: 'Because you are secret adoptees, you are completely different from public adoptees. You cannot be their representatives.' Although they did not say it openly, that is how we perceived it. But it wasn't like that, we just wanted to get together, talk to each other, but they didn't care. (...) Anyway, these people told us: 'DAS cannot become the representative of adult adoptees, because you are secret adoptees. You are different.'



Figure 13: Jogyesa Temple, Seoul (2023)

Conclusions

One of the main conclusions of my doctoral research, which I see reinforced in the latest news published in the context of the 25th anniversary of the emergence of the concept of 'public adoption', is that, faced with the loss of the hegemony of public adoption as the only acceptable model of national adoption in Korea, the adoption advocacy movement is becoming increasingly extreme and hostile. Despite the fact that the progressive diversification of family models and discourses on adoption is a reality in the Asian country, certain transformations are beginning to falter under this pressure. Thus, for example, the adoption promotion movement has managed to re-establish the legal concept of anonymous birth to prevent children from having to be legally registered in order to be given up for adoption, a condition that the 2012 Adoption Act reinforced. This is, of course, generating a great deal of controversy among various groups. DAS and other groups of internationally adopted people and single mothers have already expressed their total rejection of this measure. It will be worth following the evolution of this debate to observe and analyse how the field of national adoption in Korea will continue to develop in the coming years.

About the author

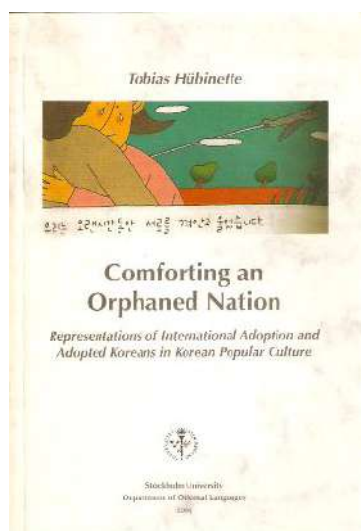


Elisa Romero Moreno

PhD in Anthropology from Seoul National University.

Elisa Romero has a degree in Social Anthropology from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. In 2010, she completed the Master of Public Orientation Anthropology at the same center. As a result of her Final Master's Thesis, she began to focus her interest on kinship, adoption and public policy studies. In 2013 she received a scholarship to study at the Academy of Korean Studies, in Gyeonggi-do (South Korea), and in 2015 she began her doctorate at the Department of Anthropology at Seoul National University. In February 2024 she completed this doctorate with her thesis *“Learning about Adoption Again”: Reshaping Domestic Adoption in South Korea Under a Child-Centered Legal Paradigm*. Currently, she works as a social educator at the Centro de Acogida de Protección Internacional in Alcobendas, Madrid.

Further Reading

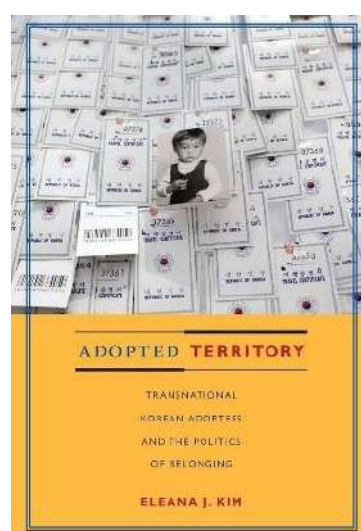


Hübinette, Tobias (2005)

Comforting an Orphaned Nation: Representations of International Adoption and Adopted Koreans in Korean Popular Culture

Stockholm University Department of Oriental Languages

In this book, the author, a Swedish anthropologist of South Korean origin, critically reinterprets the history of adoption in Korea, questioning the idealized and “do-gooder” narrative that dominated until then. This work remains considered one of the pioneering works not only in questioning the Korean “adoption industry”, but in evidencing how these processes of forced migration affect many adopted people in the construction of their identities. In that same sense, the author analyzes how Korean and international media have constructed a romanticized image of adopted people, as well as their connection with their motherland, Korea.



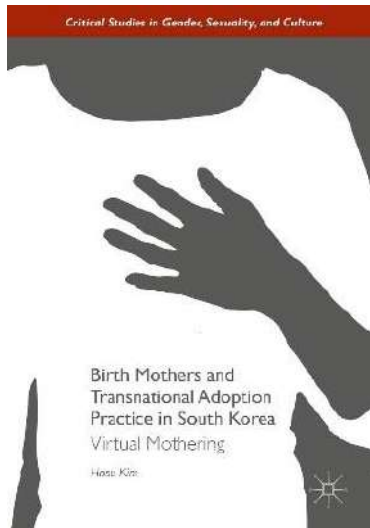
Kim, Eleana (2010)

Adopted Territory: Transnational Korean Adoptees and the Politics of Belonging

Duke University Press

In this book, anthropologist Eleana Kim accompanies various groups of international adoptees of Korean origin in the United States, giving an account of the birth not only of their efforts at organising, but also of activism for their rights as such. At the same time, the author analyzes how the Korean authorities managed the growing “return” of these people to Korea starting in the late 1980s. Reinterpreted then as a bridge between East and West, these adopted people were recategorized as overseas Koreans, a classification with interesting sociopolitical nuances that Kim reveals. This work reflects how these processes are experienced by these adopted people, as well as the impact they have on the construction of their feelings of identity and belonging.

Further Reading

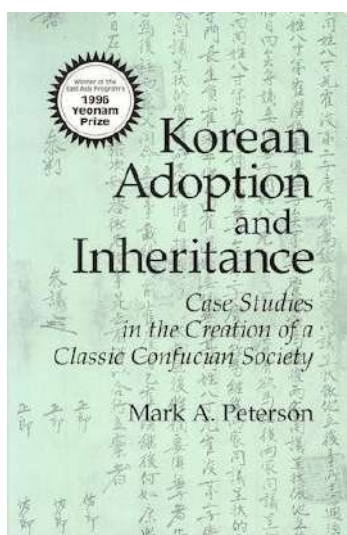


Kim, Hosu (2016)

Birth Mothers and Transnational Adoption Practice in South Korea: Virtual Mothering

Palgrave Macmillan

In general, birth mothers and fathers represent the group that has received the least attention in studies on adoption. In that sense, Hosu Kim's book represents a fundamental contribution to unraveling the perspective of those mothers who, decades ago, decided (or were forced) to send their sons and daughters for adoption to other countries. Kim also analyzes how the very concept of “birth mother” has been constructed, imbued with prejudices and suspicions. When the adopted people began to return to Korea, the author demonstrates how the construction of these women begins to change and be exploited in a sensationalist way by the media, especially by certain television programs aimed at “reuniting” mothers and children.



Peterson, Mark A. (1996)

Korean Adoption and Inheritance: Case Studies in the Creation of a Classic Confucian Society

Ithaca: Cornell University

Although the discourses and practices around adoption in Korea are changing, there is still rejection towards this way of creating a family. Interestingly, in this book, Peterson analyzes how, centuries ago, this form of kinship also underwent profound changes with the arrival of Confucianism to the Korean Peninsula from China. Specifically, the author demonstrates how the new value given to patrilineal lineages, reinforced during the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), exalted adoption as the perfect alternative in the absence of male heirs. In this work, furthermore, Peterson questions the idea of “tradition” and its construction around kinship, politics, and culture.

Further Reading



- Bae, Shannon (2018). Radical Imagination and the Solidarity Movement between Transnational Korean Adoptees and Unwed Mothers in South Korea. *Adoption & Culture* 6(2).
- Pena, Mariela (2014). *La adopción de niños y niñas en buenos aires desde un enfoque etnográfico. Valores y sentidos asignados al parentesco.* (Doctoral thesis, Universidad de Buenos Aires).
- TRACK (2012). Monitoring South Korean Intercountry and Domestic Adoption from a Human Rights Perspective Republic of Korea. Joint Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review, Republic of Korea, Second Cycle, 14th Session.

Further watching

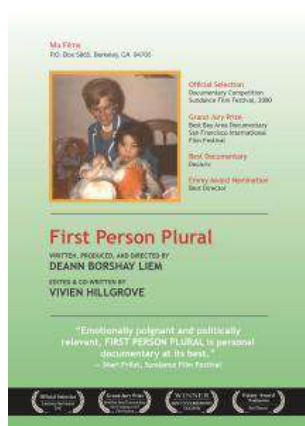


Domestic Adoptee Solidarity in Korea (Gugnaeibyanginyeondae) (2020)

Adoption! Let's meet her again. Adopted, talking about adoption [5-episode YouTube series]

South Korea

What do Korean domestic adoptees think about adoption and the changes around it in recent decades? How do you manage the challenges of the prevailing secrecy regarding this form of family? What do you think about international adoptees? In this series of five interviews, in which all the participants are Korean national adoptees, they themselves respond in first person to these and many other questions and concerns. From daily life tasks to key moments in their lives, its protagonists reflect here on the complexities of being adopted in a society that punishes those who are “different” and where the hegemonic idea of “family” continues to be quite inflexible.



Borshay Liem, Deann (2000)

First Person Plural

USA, 60 min

In this emotional documentary, the director shows the insecurities and hopes that surrounded her first trip to Korea, her native country. This piece humanizes and deromanticizes the often idealized “reunion” with the family of origin. Previously, this was almost unambiguously represented as a self-contained event that provided necessary responses to the adoptee. Although Borshay reflects the fascination of knowing his “roots”, he also shows the confusion and pain that arises in this regard. Discover how, despite feeling a physical and emotional connection with the place, she feels like a stranger to her “fellow Koreans,” just as she does to the United States. At the same time, it documents what it means to manage the new belonging to two families and the questions that arise when observing the environment that led to their adoption.

News

AFIN



New Publication in *Social Science & Medicine*

In February, the article "Between fetal viability and the viability of families. Decision making for extremely premature infants in Spain" was published in the journal *Social Science & Medicine*. The authors, Paula Martone, Anna Molas, and Diana Marre, are all members of the AFIN Group.

The article examines the medical decision-making process regarding the viability of extremely premature newborns, exploring the various elements and social actors involved in these decisions. It considers the particularities of the Spanish context and the perceptions that medical teams have about the families affected. Based on extensive fieldwork, the authors propose that fetal viability is closely linked to the "viability of families"—a concept that refers to the economic and emotional resources families have to face these situations, according to healthcare professionals' perspectives.

This article is part of Paula Martone's doctoral dissertation (co-supervised by Drs. Anna Molas and Diana Marre), currently in its third year, which focuses on the social aspects of premature births and the implementation of artificial placenta technology for their treatment.

The full article is available at the following [link](#).

(Re)pensant l'educació sexual selected at two documentary festivals

The documentary *(Re)pensant l'educació sexual*, which conveys some of the findings from the SexAFIN project by the AFIN Group, was produced by *La Rectoria* and premiered on Catalan television (TV3) in late 2023. The production was carried out in collaboration with TV3, the Institut Català de les Empreses Culturals, and the Instituto de las Mujeres.

Currently, the documentary has been selected as one of the 16 finalists at the Sobrarbe International Ethnographic Documentary Festival, the only festival in Spain specializing in visual anthropology. It will be screened on April 4, competing for the general awards for Best Documentary and Best Research.



Additionally, on February 15, the documentary was screened at the Sex Education Film Festival, held from February 10 to 16 in the town of Terrassa. Although the festival primarily focuses on short films about sex education, the organizers requested the screening of *Re(pensant l'educació sexual)* as part of a complementary activity aimed at adult audiences, particularly families. This screening allowed the festival to expand its thematic scope, incorporating childhood sex education alongside topics related to youth and adulthood.

Book Publication on Adoption in Chile

In February, the book *Pasado, presente y futuro de la adopción en Chile: Hacia un enfoque centrado en los derechos*

de niños, niñas y adolescentes was published, authored by Dr. Irene Salvo Agoglia, member of the AFIN Research Group, with the support of UNICEF Chile and the National Service for Specialized Protection of Children and Adolescents.

This book is the result of research involving various stakeholders—professionals, adoptive families, adoptees, members of the judiciary, and policymakers—and provides a historical overview of the evolution of adoption in Chile. It explores cultural, legal, and technical transformations within the adoption system, addressing past practices such as forced adoptions and child trafficking. The book adopts a child-centered approach, focusing on the needs and rights of adoptees across different life stages, emphasizing their best interests, the right to identity, and

the right to participation.

This publication comes at a pivotal moment for Chile, on the brink of enacting a new legal framework on adoption. It highlights current and future challenges and offers specific recommendations to strengthen the Chilean adoption system. Notably, this is the first publication of its kind produced in a country of origin in international adoption.

For further information, see the publication at this [link](#).

Premiere of the New Podcast Series *Conversaciones AFINes on Reproductive Mobilities*

On Monday, February 3, the new series of the podcast *Conversaciones AFINes*, titled "*Reproductive Mobilities: Voices from the REPROMOB Project*", premiered on iVoox and Spotify, with a new episode released weekly.

This eight-episode series, directed by Alexandra Desy and Giulia Colavolpe-Severi, marks the conclusion of the REPROMOB project: "*Repro-flows in Europe and Latin America: Mobilities of People and Gametes in the Fragmented Context of the Transnational Regulation of Assisted Reproduction and Adoption.*"

The project, which is multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary, transnational, and intersectional, has been funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation, and Universities. It was carried out by an international team of researchers, with joint coordination by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and the Universitat de Barcelona.

SexAFIN Presents the Exhibition *Sexualitats i infàncies: construint sabers*

On Wednesday, February 19, the exhibition *Sexualitats i infàncies: construint sabers* was inaugurated. This space invites reflection on sexuality from the perspective of childhood and



has been funded by the UAB Department of Culture.

The presentation featured the participation of Laura Santamaría, Vice-Rector for Culture and Linguistic Policy at UAB; Diana Marre, Director of the AFIN Group; and Hugo Valenzuela, Director of the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology. In their speeches, the speakers emphasized the importance of making sexuality a topic that can be openly discussed within families and educational settings, moving away from the taboos that still persist in society. They also highlighted the role of affective-sexual education in childhood and adolescence as a fundamental tool for fostering equitable relationships and individual well-being.

The exhibition is structured around seven dimensions that address different aspects of childhood sexuality, ranging

from body awareness to identity diversity, puberty changes, and the role of technology in shaping knowledge about sexuality. Each of these dimensions explores how children perceive, express, and construct their understanding of sexuality through their experiences and narratives.

The exhibition features forty-seven drawings created by children aged six to twelve, illustrating their representations and questions on these topics. It also includes a section with educational resources in book format and a collection of crocheted genital models by artist Elisabet Pérez Méndez—an initiative aimed at challenging stereotypes and expanding knowledge about bodily diversity. Additionally, the exhibition includes a screening of the documentary *(Re)pensant l'educació sexual*, directed by Dr. Estel Malgosa, which provides a



critical perspective on sex education and its current challenges.

The inauguration was attended by faculty members from the UAB Department of Anthropology, AFIN members, students, and individuals interested in the topic. After the welcoming remarks, the coordinators of the SexAFIN project, Dr. Bruna Alvarez, Dr. Estel Malgosa, and MSc. Zenaida Andreica, led a guided tour of the exhibition. During the tour, they linked the children's drawings to their research findings and encouraged attendees to interact with the exhibition using QR codes that allowed them to answer questions or share reflections on the displayed illustrations.

The exhibition will remain open until March 7 at the *Sala d'Exposicions UAB*, located in the Library of Communication and General Newspaper Archive building in *Plaça Cívica*. It can be visited Monday to Thursday from 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM and on Fridays from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM.