

Tobias Hübinette

The adoption issue in Korea

Diaspora politics in the age of globalization

Introduction

This article is a short presentation of a Ph.D. project which considers the complex relationship between a diasporic community and its homeland,¹ in this case the 150,000 adopted Koreans and the Republic of Korea (Korea). After a discussion of different perspectives on international adoption, I will place the matter in a Korean context, which encompasses the tradition of displacement since the second half of the 19th century and today's politics of globalization under president Kim Dae Jung. The purpose is to illustrate how overseas adoption became an issue in Korea and to speculate on its symbolic meaning for a postcolonial, divided and dispersed nation. It will also consider the role of the adoption issue (*ibyangmunjê*) in creating a new Korean ethnicity in the age of globalization.

Two perspectives of international adoption

The subject of international adoption, also called 'inter-country adoption', has existed for merely half a century and is possible to study from several different angles. Western scholars tend to focus on the psychosocial issues of an adoptees'

¹ For an introduction to the intricate relationship between a diaspora and a homeland, see Walker Connor, 'The Impact of Homelands upon Diasporas', in Gabriel Sheffer (ed.), *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* London and Sydney, 1986, pp. 16-46.

adjustment to the adopting family and assimilation to the host culture. This is especially evident in the leading adopting regions of North America, Scandinavia and Western Europe, where a significant number of researchers in the field are psychologists, psychiatrists or social scientists.² After World War II, international adoption has been the last resort for infertile middle-class couples, and is perceived by Western societies as a way of rescuing a non-White child from the miseries of the so-called Third world.³ This may explain why few studies have examined the various consequences of international adoption for the sending countries.⁴

In contrast, the Korean perspective is not only one of a supplying country but also the country in the world, which has sent away the largest number of children for adoption.⁵ Research in Korea has been focused on why the country is the only OECD country sending children for overseas adoption and how it can increase and promote the alternative of domestic adoption from a legislative point of view.⁶ The subject of overseas adoption is considered a national trauma, a source of shame and humiliation and a painful reminder of the

² I am thinking about professor Howard Altstein and professor Rita J. Simon in the US (both social scientists), professor Michael Bohman in Sweden (a psychiatrist) and professor René Hoksbergen in the Netherlands (a social psychologist).

³ For a critique of international adoption, see Damien Ngabonziza, 'Moral and Political Issues Facing Relinquishing Countries', *Adoption & Fostering* 15:4 (1991), pp. 75-80.

⁴ One of the most important aspects being the almost complete lack of a social welfare system for unmarried mothers and their children as a result of continuous international adoption. See Nam Soon Huh, 'Services for Out-of-Wedlock Children in Korea', *Early Child Development and Care* 85:1 (1993): pp. 35-46.

⁵ As mentioned in the introduction, 150,000. To be honest, there are no reliable statistics for the second most sending country, which would be India or Colombia, but they would be far off from challenging Korea's top position. Still every year, 1700 children leave the country for adoption. For a discussion on the demographic aspect of international adoption, see Peter Selman, 'The Demographic History of Intercountry Adoption', in Peter Selman (ed.), *Intercountry Adoption: Developments, Trends and Perspectives*, London, 2000, pp. 15-39.

⁶ See for example Tai-Soon Bai, *Attitudinal Differences among Prospective Adoptive Parents in Korea*, Ph.D.-dissertation, University of Chicago, 1987, Chông-hûi Ch'oe, *Yangjabôbûi kaejôngûl wihan pikyobôbjôk yôngu* [A comparative study for a revision of the adoption law], Ph.D.-dissertation, Ehwa Womens' University, 1993, and Hu-yông Kim, *Yangjajêdoui kaesônbananê kwanhan yôngu* [A study for reform measures of the adoption system], Ph.D.-dissertation, Chongju University, 1996.

country's dependency on the West.⁷ This helps to explain in part why there are such a small number of studies in Korea regarding what happens to the adoptees themselves after leaving Korea when being placed for adoption.⁸

The colonial exodus

Overseas adoption from Korea can be linked historically to a long tradition of displacement and dispersal of ethnic Koreans. During the Mongol invasions of the 13th century, the Japanese invasions in the 1590s, and the Manchu invasions during the first half of the 17th century, tens of thousands of Koreans were taken away as captives or hostages,⁹ while Ming China (1368-1644) forced Korea to send tributes to the emperor, which included human beings, consisting primarily of women (*kongnyô*).¹⁰

Modern Korean emigration began in the 1860s when the Choson dynasty began to crumble as a result of intruding Western imperial powers. The first wave of emigrants found their way to the Russian Far East territory, which borders present day North Korea.¹¹ During the same decade, Koreans started to pour in to Chinese Manchuria in great numbers¹² and in the 1870s and 1880s emigration to Japan and the US, respectively, began in earnest.¹³ These four countries, Russia, later Soviet Union and Central Asia, China, Japan and

⁷ 'Pukkûrôun koasuch'ul 1wi' [Shameful orphan exporter number one], *Chosun Ilbo*, 27 November 1990.

⁸ One exception being In-sôn Pak, *Haeoeibyânginûi bburich'atgiê kwanhan yôngu* [A study on search of Korean adoptees], Ph.D.-dissertation, Ehwa Womens' University, 1994.

⁹ Two hundred thousand has been mentioned for the first invasion, see Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1984, p. 149.

¹⁰ Woo-keun Han, *The History of Korea*, Seoul, 1970, p. 223.

¹¹ Kwang-kyu Lee, *Overseas Koreans*, Seoul, 2000, pp. 139-143.

¹² Changyu Piao, 'The History of Koreans in China and the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture', in Dae-Sook Suh and Edward J. Shultz (ed.), *Koreans in China, Papers of the Center for Korean Studies No. 16*, Honolulu, 1990, pp. 44-77. The figures for China derive from Piao.

¹³ Sonia Ryang, *North Koreans in Japan: Language, Ideology and Identity*, Boulder and Oxford, 1997, p. 6, and Won Moo Hurh, *The Korean Americans*, Westport and London, 1998, p. 36.

the US have since that time been the main host countries for overseas Koreans.

From this historical perspective, the causes of mass emigration from Korea can be intimately linked to the country's semi-colonial status from the second half of the 19th century. However, the main exodus of Koreans took place during the colonial years: in 1945, 180,000 individuals lived in Soviet Central Asia after having been relocated in 1937,¹⁴ with 2.2 million in China, another 2 million in Japan and approximately 10,000 in the United States. This massive uprooting of people is important to bear in mind as a background to understanding the meaning of the adoption issue in Korea today.

Division and war

The liberation of Korea and the division and war which followed meant a complete disruption of what was left of traditional Korea.¹⁵ The internal and external movement of people during colonial days reached its peak as armies marched back and forth over the peninsula, resulting in an estimated 3.5 million Koreans being killed on both sides.¹⁶

In 1954, the Korean government under president Syngman Rhee, initiated the country's overseas adoption program as a solution to the embarrassing presence of thousands of bi-racial children who were the products of Western military engagement.¹⁷ Two years later, the American evangelist Harry Holt founded Holt Children's Services. It has since become the dominating agency for Korean adoption with approximately a 70% share of the market.¹⁸ During the 1950s, 3,700 children left Korea for adoption, the majority being bi-racial,

¹⁴ Kwang-kyu Lee, op. cit., p. 140.

¹⁵ Sung-Won Hong, 'The Korean War and the Lives of Koreans', *Korea Focus* 8:4 (2000), pp. 75-84.

¹⁶ Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings, *Korea: The Unknown War. An Illustrated History*, London and New York, 1988, pp. 407-408.

¹⁷ Youn-Taek Tahk, 'Intercountry Adoption Program in Korea. Policy, Law and Service', in René Hoksbergen (ed.), *Adoption in Worldwide Perspective: A Review of Programs, Policies and Legislation in 14 countries*, Berwyn and Lisse, 1986, pp. 79-92.

¹⁸ The amazing story of Holt Children's Services is told by Bertha Holt in *The Seed from the East*, Minneapolis, 1992.

with the US as the main country of destination.¹⁹

The years of war were followed by rapid industrialization and urbanization under various military regimes. In 1961 Korea passed its adoption law, which restricted the co-ordination of overseas adoption to four agencies and created the most effective legal and logistical framework. This structure is still considered a model for other child-supplying countries.²⁰ The thousands of children who were abandoned and declared foundlings in president Park Chung Hee's Korea, became the new source for continuous overseas adoption and a strict birth control program,²¹ as well as being part of a cynical bonding strategy with the country's Western allies.²² During the 1960s, 7,500 Korean children were adopted by the North American and Western European countries, which had taken part in the Korean war.²³

The adoption issue

Overseas adoption became an issue in the 1970s as part of the propaganda war waged between the two Koreas. While 50,000 children left Korea during the decade, North Korea accused South Korea of selling children to Westerners as

¹⁹ Everett M. Ressler, Neil Boothby and Daniel J. Steinbock, *Unaccompanied Children: Care and Protection in Wars, Natural Disasters and Refugee Movements*, New York and Oxford, 1977, p. 42.

²⁰ Ki-wôn Chông and Hyôn-ae An, *Kugnae mit kugoeibyangûi hyônangwajê* [The consideration task of domestic and overseas adoption], Seoul, 1994, p. 8.

²¹ The population-control policy also included coercive sterilization and was directed against urban low-class women. See Hyoung Cho, 'Fertility Control, Reproductive Rights, and Women's Empowerment in Korea', *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 3:1 (1997), pp. 103-132.

²² 'Family-like Closeness between ROK, US', *Korea Newsreview* 17 October 1981.

²³ For estimated numbers decade by decade, see In Sun Park, *People Who Search. Ppurirûl ch'atnûn saramdûl*, Seoul, 1998, p. 229. Country by country 100,000 are to be found in the US, 11,000 in France, 8,500 each in Sweden and Denmark, 6,000 in Norway, 4,000 each in Belgium and the Netherlands, 3,000 in Australia, 2,500 in Germany, 1,500 each in Canada and Switzerland, 500 each in Italy, Luxembourg and New Zealand, 100 in the UK and smaller numbers in countries like Finland, Iceland and Ireland.

an appalling example of so called 'flunkeyism' (*sadaejuûi*).²⁴ In 1976, president Park answered by graciously inviting the 21,000 adopted Koreans living in Scandinavia to a motherland tour.²⁵ The overwhelming majority of the adoptees were still infants or small children at the time, so this symbolic invitation led to nothing more than the first official recognition of the existence of the adopted Koreans.

During the following decade and the tenure of president Chun Doo Hwan, overseas adoption continued in even larger numbers, with 70,000 children consisting primarily of those born out of wedlock. In 1985-86 the numbers peaked with almost 9,000 children a year being sent overseas for adoption. This represented one percent of the total number of children from those age groups being born in the country. Another interesting fact is that the first half of the 1970s and the middle of the 1980s were also years, which showed the highest emigration movement from Korea to almost the same countries affected by adoption.²⁶

The Olympic Games in 1988 meant not only the symbolic breakthrough of the democratization of Korea,²⁷ but it also served to highlight the adoption issue. The American magazine, *The Progressive* opened up by publishing an investigative article in its January edition, which portrayed South Korea as a country dealing in the business of children.²⁸ The article was immediately serialised in North Korean magazine *The People's Korea* and has since been a

²⁴ See for example Robert Whyman, 'Baby-snatching', *The Guardian* 20 June 1973, and Sang-in Sin, 'Sillagwon (IV)' [Paradise lost], *Hanyang* 17 January 1978.

²⁵ Bo Gunnarsson, 'Anka eller jippo? Sydkorea bjuder på gratis resor' [A hoax or a gimmick? South Korea offers free travel], *Dagens Nyheter* 30 March 1976.

²⁶ 'Koreans Living Abroad Number 1.9 Million', *Korea Newsreview* 21 September 1985. While excluding Koreans living in Communist countries the 1.9 million were divided among the following countries: 976,128 in the US, 692,762 in Japan, 118,868 in the Middle East, 52,009 in Latin America, 33,814 in Europe, 28,622 in the rest of Asia and 3,204 in Africa.

²⁷ George Totten, *The Democratization of South Korea and the Role of the Olympics in the Process*, Centre for Pacific Asia Studies, Stockholm University. Occasional paper 3, Stockholm, 1988.

²⁸ Matthew Rothschild, 'Babies for Sale: South Koreans Make Them, Americans Buy Them', *The Progressive* 52:1 (1988), pp. 18-23.

recurring theme when discussing the adoption issue in South Korea. The negative attention which followed, created an image of South Korea as the worlds' leading orphan exporting country (*koasuch'ulguk*).

The frenzied atmosphere which resulted led to the hasty decision to set up a deadline for overseas adoption and a commitment to decrease the number annually.²⁹ Visiting programs for adopted Koreans were initiated,³⁰ and overseas adoption began to appear as a frequent subject in documentaries, articles and movies. The best example is Susanne Brink's *Arirang* from 1991, which portrays the miseries of an adopted Korean woman in Sweden.³¹ Another media-drama came in 1996 during the nation-wide hunt for a bone marrow donor for Brian Bauman, an adopted Korean, who was living in the US.³² Finally last year, a severely handicapped adopted Korean boy from the US, Adam King, solemnly opened the Korean baseball league.³³

Globalization the Korean way

In 1995 president Kim Young Sam launched his globalization drive (*segvehwa*)

²⁹ 'Kugnae koa haeoeibyang. 96 nyônbut'ô chônmyôn chungdan. Kug'gamjaryo' [Domestic and overseas adoption of orphans. Total suspension from 1996. Decrease in numbers], *Dong-A Ilbo* 28 November 1990. The first deadline of 1996 failed after abortive attempts already in 1981 and 1985, and the year of 2015 is the most recent one ahead. Still around 2000 children a year leave Korea for overseas adoption, and the numbers actually went up during the IMF crisis of 1997-98. In total, during the 1990s, 20,000 Korean children were adopted abroad.

³⁰ The first one by YWCA, starting in 1990. Other institutes, which are organising visiting programs are Sogang University, National Institute of International Education and Overseas Korean Foundation.

³¹ The adoption issue has also turned up as a subject in songs performed by popular music groups like Clon, Sinawe and Sky.

³² 'Bauman-gun. Kohyang kwihwan chunbi' [Private Bauman prepares himself to return to the motherland], *Chosun Ilbo* 26 October 1996. The number of newspaper articles dealing with overseas adoption has increased dramatically during the 1990s. A search in *Chosun Ilbo's* electronic article archive (www.chosun.com), searchable from 1990, results in the following numbers: 1990 8, 1991 2, 1992 13, 1993 6, 1994 19, 1995 17, 1996 48, 1997 46, 1998 42, 1999 56 and 2000 65.

³³ 'Aedôm K'ing', *Dong-A Ilbo* 5 April 2001.

with the words, 'Globalization must be underpinned by Koreanization'.³⁴ The president decided that the way to achieve this was to reconnect with the 5 million overseas Koreans, who are officially defined as assets in the globalization drive.³⁵ The end of the Cold war resulted in full access to 2 million Koreans in China and 500,000 in the newly independent Central Asian states. The Chinese Koreans started to arrive in Korea as migrant workers, as brides filling the shortage of women created by sex-biased abortion,³⁶ or even as adopted children,³⁷ while the Korean minority in Central Asia played an intermediary role for Korean investment in the region.³⁸

In 1997, the Overseas Korean Foundation was inaugurated as the central authority responsible for overseas Koreans (*chaeoe tongp'o*) in the quest for globalization. Like its civic counterpart, Korean Sharing Movement,³⁹ the foundation includes the adopted Koreans as an integrated part of a global Korean community.⁴⁰ The organization of events like the World Korean Ethnic Sports Festival and the academic World Korean Ethnic Conference, is an

³⁴ Young Sam Kim, *Korea's Quest for Reform and Globalization: Selected Speeches of President Kim Young Sam*, Seoul, 1995, p. 273.

³⁵ Kyung-soo Chun, 'Policy for Five Million Overseas Koreans', *Korea Focus* 2:6 (1994), pp. 59-65. Among the 5 million overseas Koreans excluding adoptees 2 million are to be found in China, 1 million in the US and Canada, 800,000 in Japan, 500,000 in Central Asia and Russia, 100,000 in Latin America, 65,000 in Europe, 60,000 in Oceania, 40,000 in South East Asia and the rest in the Middle East and Africa.

³⁶ Katharine H.S. Moon, 'Strangers in the Midst of Globalization: Migrant Workers and Korean Nationalism', in Samuel S. Kim (ed.), *Korea's Globalization*, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 147-169.

³⁷ Kim Ji-yông, "'10nyônch'i wôlgûb' yuhokê Chosônjok yôsôngdûl 'hao'" [Ten years' monthly salaries temptation for Chinese-Korean women], *Wôlgan Chosôn* 7 January 2002.

³⁸ This especially applies to Daewoo's activities in Uzbekistan. The idea to use Westernized overseas Koreans as intermediaries for economic expansion was the primary motive behind the 1996 publication of the ten volume *Segyeûi Hanminjok* by the Ministry of Unification.

³⁹ *Introduction to Korean Sharing Movement (Purpose of establishment)* (25 October 2001): <http://www.ksm.or.kr/English/ksmi3.htm>

⁴⁰ In the year of 2000, Overseas Korean Foundation dispatched Kim Duk-Soo and his Samul Nori group for a tour in Scandinavia with the explicit aim of spreading Korean culture to the more than 20,000 adopted Koreans living in the region.

important part of this community building and ethnic mobilization strategy.⁴¹

The Korean way of globalization, by embracing overseas Koreans, has reached new heights during the current presidency of Kim Dae Jung. In 1999, a dual citizenship law came into effect, which includes adoptees, as well.⁴² President Kim has shown a remarkable interest in the adoption issue as a part of his political agenda. This interest dates back to his time in opposition and exile when he met several adopted Koreans in different Western countries.⁴³

In 1998, during his first presidential year, Kim Dae Jung invited 29 adopted Koreans from eight different countries to a meeting in the Blue House where he, on behalf of the country, delivered a moving apology for sending away 150,000 Korean children.⁴⁴ In a letter to an adopted Korean woman, whom he met in Sweden in 1989 and who took part in the meeting, Kim Dae Jung wrote, 'Globalization does not mean to live together with other countries and nations, but in the first place to reconnect to our own blood line, amicably and tenderly. That may function as the bridge which will make globalization possible.'⁴⁵

A diasporic community?

Leading theorists in diaspora studies, such as Robert Cohen or William Safran, would have difficulties in defining adopted Koreans as a diaspora in the classical

⁴¹ *Research* (28 October 2001): http://www.aks.ac.kr/aksintro/e_research.htm

⁴² 'O'seas Koreans to be Granted Voting Rights', *Korea Newsreview* 29 August 1998. After fierce protests from China and Russia, the law actually had to exclude the Koreans living in those two countries plus the Koreans in Japan as the law in its final version only included those who had emigrated after the establishment of ROK 1948.

⁴³ For example, through his acquaintance with the famous American professor Edwin Reischauer, who had adopted a Korean child.

⁴⁴ Ki-ch'ôl Sông, 'Kim Taet'ongnyông "Haeoeibyanga" ch'och'ông mogukûi chông nanuô' [President Kim invites overseas adoptees and shares the affection of the motherland], *Kugmin Ilbo* 24 October 1998. Every time president Kim goes abroad a special meeting is arranged with adopted Koreans.

⁴⁵ Letter from president Kim Dae Jung to Ms Lena-Kim Arctadius-Svenungsson dated the 11th of January 2001.

meaning of the term.⁴⁶ The group lacks everything from a common language to any serious attempts to endogamy. Instead the absolute majority of the adopted Koreans would most likely consider themselves a part of their respective host country, albeit originally immigrants.⁴⁷ The only shared aspects agreed upon are a common origin and the history of having been adopted from Korea.

However, the Korean narrative tells something different. The adopted Koreans are automatically perceived as Korean brethren, and the fact that the now-adult adoptees grew up in a non-Korean, Western environment for at least eighty percent of their lives is ignored. The truth is that the adopted Koreans are trapped between their birth country's touching but unrealistic dream of a global ethnic Korean community,⁴⁸ and a Western culture, which demands complete assimilation and absolute loyalty and refuses to allow anything else but rescue fantasies, colonial desires and orientalist performances.⁴⁹

The creation of a global Korean ethnicity

The meaning of the adoption issue in Korea today appears to be a new kind of nationalism – or to use Walker Connor's term, 'ethnonationalism' – which is in the process of developing in South Korea.⁵⁰ This nationalism is linked to

⁴⁶ See Robert Cohen, *Global Diasporas. An introduction*, London, 1999, and William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora* 1:1 (1991), pp. 83-99. Both Cohen and Safran emphasize the existence of a myth of a homeland.

⁴⁷ The existence of an organized adopted Korean community since the middle of the 1980s still only reaches out to a fraction of all adopted Koreans, and some countries do not even have a Korean adoptee association.

⁴⁸ See Changzoo Song's chapter 'Narratives on and of Overseas Koreans and Korean Adoptees', in his Ph.D.-dissertation *The Contending Discourses of Nationalism in Post-Colonial Korea and Nationalism as an Oppressive and Anti-Democratic Force*, University of Hawaii, 1999, pp. 222-244.

⁴⁹ For an analysis of the colonial discourse in international adoption, see Anthony Shiu, 'Flexible Production: International Adoption, Race, Whiteness', *Jouvert* 6:1-2 (2001), <http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v6i1-2/shiu.htm>

⁵⁰ Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, Princeton, 1994. See especially chapter eight, "Man is a n/rational animal (Beyond reason: The nature of the ethnonational bond)", pp. 195-199. Slogans like 'Uri han minjok' [We are one race] or

the process of reunification,⁵¹ to the Korean interpretation of the meaning of globalization, to anti-Western sentiments after the IMF crisis,⁵² and to a growing and more realistic self-understanding of the country's postcolonial status.⁵³

By winning the struggle of legitimacy on an economic and political level, a newly democratized South Korea can now afford to acknowledge the existence of not only a second Korean state, but the existence of numerous diverse and de-territorialized Korean communities around the world. Prior to this point, South Korea was almost as encapsulated in a siege mentality as its northern neighbour, which accused emigrants of being un-patriotic and betraying the nation. Now, South Korea has finally come to understand the importance of the existence of five million ethnic Koreans outside the peninsula. A Korean nation state, which still lacks complete unification, leads to a racialized nationalism whereby blood (*hyôlt'ong*), as the lowest common denominator, is beginning to constitute the collective sense of oneness.⁵⁴

Additional to this newest development is the rediscovery of peripheral and forgotten moments of modern Korean history, such as the sad fate of the 'comfort women' or the Sakhalin Koreans.⁵⁵ This also serves to reinforce the harsh realization of the country's position as a powerless and dependent client state in the Western, American hegemonic world system, to borrow Immanuel

'Uri han kajok' [We are one family] are excellent examples of this new ethnonationalism.

⁵¹ South Korean reunification politics has been skilfully examined by Roy Richard Grinker in *Korea and its Futures: Unification and the Unfinished War*, New York, 1998.

⁵² For an attempt to understand the meaning of globalization in Korea after the IMF crisis, see C. Fred Alford, *Think no Evil: Korean Values in the Age of Globalization*, Ithaca and London, 1999.

⁵³ This is also what is proposed by Hyun Ok Park in 'Segyehwa: Globalization and nationalism in Korea', *Journal of the International Institute* 4:1 (1996), <http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/journal/vol4no1/segveh.html>

⁵⁴ Gi-wook Shin, James Freda and Gihong Yi, 'The Politics of Korean Nationalism in Divided Korea', *Nations and Nationalism* 5:4 (1999), pp. 465-484.

⁵⁵ Hyunah Young, 'Re-membering the Korean Military Comfort Women: Nationalism, Sexuality and Silencing', in Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi (eds.), *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*, New York and London, 1998, pp. 123-141. Seen in the Korean traditional thinking of serving the great, to give humans as a tribute to a dominating power could well be said to be a Korean tradition: 'comfort women' to the Japanese during the first half of the 20th century and children to the Americans during the second half.

Wallerstein's words.⁵⁶ It is in the shadow of this new consciousness of post-colonial Korea, that adopted Koreans have emerged, along with other almost hidden Korean communities like the pro-North Koreans in Japan, dissidents in Europe and the approximately 100,000 Korean women who are married to American servicemen.⁵⁷

On an individual level, South Koreans have come to understand their shared fate with millions of ethnic Koreans in North Korea and around the world as being a collectively dispersed family (*isan kajok*) after a century of brutal uprooting in the forms of colonialism, division, war, emigration or adoption.⁵⁸ Indeed, it is possible to talk about homelessness and family division as a universal Korean trait. Adopted Koreans and other overseas Koreans are seen both as a tragic symbol of the nation's historical suffering and a guarantee for a bright future for a global Korean community seen as an extended family.

It is precisely this utopian vision of a global ethnic community of 75 million Koreans, which the *minjung* ideologist, Paik Nak-chung has scrutinized in such a poignant way.⁵⁹ Professor Paik is well aware that this so-called homogenous community (*tanil minjok*) has to be not only multinational, considering the majority of the overseas Koreans have changed their citizenship, but also multilingual, as Korean is no longer the mother-tongue of many exiled countrymen. It also appears that this truly diverse ethnic Korean

⁵⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, New York, 1983.

⁵⁷ This number excludes all the thousands of Korean women married to non-military Western men, not the least of which are academics engaged in Korean studies. My personal estimation is that 75 percent of all Koreanists are either married to a Korean woman or have an adopted child from Korea.

⁵⁸ The relationship between division and war and family dispersal is dealt with by Hyo-Jae Lee, 'National Division and Family Problems', *Korea Journal* 25:8 (1985), pp. 4-18. Overseas adoption directly involves at least one million South Koreans. Interestingly the Korean Welfare Foundation (<http://www.findparent.or.kr>) divides its search page on the internet between families dispersed because of division, families dispersed because of emigration and families dispersed because of adoption.

⁵⁹ Paik Nak-chung, 'The Possibility and Significance of a Korean Ethnic Community'. Paper presented at the International conference on Vision for the Korean race in the 21st century, Wonkwang University, Iksan, Korea, October 11-12, 1996.

community is a perfect example of the new global ethnoscape, which Arjun Appadurai means when writing ‘[...]no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous’.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis and London, 1996, p. 48.