

Notes on Transliteration, Terminology, and Pseudonyms

ROMANIZATION

I follow the McCune-Reischauer system for the romanization of Korean words, and the Korean convention of family name first. Exceptions are made for names of places (e.g., Seoul) and people with commonly recognized English transliterations (e.g., Syngman Rhee).

ADOPTION TERMS

Since the late 1990s, the term “transnational adoption” has gained currency among academics—a move that is largely a result of the theoretical interest in transnational processes related to “globalization.” The vast majority of these adoptions could also be described as transracial adoptions, a term that came into usage around the adoptions of black and mixed-race children into mostly white families in the United States during the 1960s. In chapter 1, I follow the dominant conventions of the adoption profession by using “intercountry” or “international” adoption interchangeably. In Korea, the terms “foreign adoption” (*kugoe ibyang*; as opposed to domestic adoption, *kungnae ibyang*) or “overseas adoption” (*haeoe ibyang*) are most commonly employed to denote the movement of children from Korea to the West, and the latter resonates with the contemporary interest in diasporic or “overseas” populations. I refer to transnational adoption from the Korean perspective as “overseas adoption.” Regarding the children born to Korean women and fathered by American or United Nations soldiers I follow the conventions of the period, which also reflect the preoccupations of Americans and Koreans regarding these hybrid children—“mixed race” in the United States, and “mixed blood” (*honhyöl*) in Korean.

Certain terms have become commonly used among adoptees and adoption professionals to describe the “adoption triad” comprised of birth parents, adoptive parents, and adoptees. The genitors of the child, who may have been called “natural” or “real” parents in the past, are now often referred to as “birth parents” or “biological parents.” Some adoptees use the Korean words “omma” (*omma*) or “omoni” (*omöni*) to refer to their Korean mothers, whether or not they have been reunited. I employ “birth parents,” and “natal parents” interchangeably to refer to adoptees’ Korean parents.

Adult Korean adoptees in Europe and the United States began designing the form and content of Korean adoptee culture and identity in the 1990s, and the lexical conventions that have been taken up suggest the heterogeneity of adoptee social practices. The adoptee Sunny Jo created the acronym KAD for “Korean Adoptee,” a form that she further defines in her essay “The Creation and Rise of KAD as a Separate Identity and Nation” (2004). The acronym KAD is often used in online communities, such as on Korean Adoptees Worldwide, the electronic mailing list that Jo manages, but most adoptees I met and talked with used “adoptee” or “Korean adoptee” to describe themselves and their community. Similar to the domestic United States adoptee activists who promote the use of “adopted person,” some Korean adoptees preferred to use the term “adopted Korean” because of their concern about the infantilizing and diminutive construction of “adoptee” that connotes for them the ways in which adoptees are often construed as perennial children. Others I’ve met in the Minneapolis Twin Cities area reverse the conventional construction of “Korean adoptee” to highlight their Koreanness by referring to themselves as “Korean, adopted” (usually in contradistinction to “Korean Koreans”). Meanwhile, adoptee activists in Korea invented the acronym OAK for “overseas adopted Korean,” which was then taken up by the Korean government’s Overseas Koreans Foundation for their adult adoptee programs. Adoptees who have returned to live in Korea also sometimes eschew the common construction *ibyanga*, which means adopted child, and refer to themselves as *ibyang* (adopt) or *ibyangin* (adopted person). I elect to use “Korean adoptee” and “adopted Korean” interchangeably, as they are the terms in most common usage among adoptees. As this brief foray into adoptee naming conventions suggests, the “global community” of adoptees is not a unitary object but rather is composed of subsets of regional and

online groups with distinct histories and concerns even as they have become increasingly coordinated under the broad umbrella of the Korean adoptee global network.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Given the complex geopolitics of the Korean peninsula, it is necessary to qualify my choice of language when referring to Korea. “Korea,” in common English usage, most often denotes “South Korea” or the Republic of Korea (ROK), thereby implicitly undermining any legitimacy the North Korean state (DPRK) may have as a representative of the Korean people. For reasons of style over politics, I follow this convention throughout. At other times I use “Korea” in quotes to indicate a reified notion that conflates place, culture, and identity, and I use South Korea (without quotes) to indicate the specificity of the South Korean state (ROK) and its bounded geopolitical territory.

PSEUDONYMS

All organizations in this book are referred to by their real names. Most of the adoptees who appear in this dissertation are public figures known within the adoptee community, and they requested that their real names be used in lieu of the conventional assignment of pseudonyms. I reserve the use of pseudonyms for adoptees who are not active in formal organizing activities and who do not have a recognizable role in the community. I also chose to assign pseudonyms in cases where I draw upon adoptees’ personal experiences that are not directly related to their work in adoptee organizing or community building.