



From Orphan to Adoptee: U.S. Empire and Genealogies of Korean Adoption (Difference Incorporated)

SooJin Pate

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Since the 1950s, more than 100,000 Korean children have been adopted by predominantly white Americans; they were orphans of the Korean War, or so the story went. But begin the story earlier, as SooJin Pate does, and what has long been viewed as humanitarian rescue reveals itself as an exercise in expanding American empire during the Cold War.

Transnational adoption was virtually nonexistent in Korea until U.S. military intervention in the 1940s. Currently it generates \$35 million in revenue—an economic miracle for South Korea and a social and political boon for the United States. Rather than focusing on the families “made whole” by these adoptions, this book identifies U.S. militarism as the condition by which displaced babies became orphans, some of whom were groomed into desirable adoptees, normalized for American audiences, and detached from their past and culture.

Using archival research, film, and literary materials—including the cultural work of adoptees—Pate explores the various ways in which Korean children were employed by the U.S. nation-state to promote the myth of American exceptionalism, to expand U.S. empire during the burgeoning Cold War, and to solidify notions of the American family. In *From Orphan to Adoptee* we finally see how Korean adoption became the crucible in which technologies of the U.S. empire were invented and honed.

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