



**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY  
STANDARD LEVEL  
PAPER 1**

Friday 14 November 2008 (afternoon)

1 hour

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**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Read the passage carefully and then answer all the questions.

*Texts in this examination paper have been edited: word additions or explanations are shown in square brackets [ ]; substantive deletions of text are indicated by ellipses in square brackets [...]; minor changes are not indicated.*

*Extract from Howell, S. 2003. "Kinning: the creation of life trajectories in transnational adoptive families", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 9: 465-484.*

Transnational adoption has become an increasingly popular means for Norwegian couples to create a family. In Norway, where blood is the dominant metaphor for expressing kin relationships, adoptive families have a problem in the absence of shared blood. Adoptive parents engage in practices that may be interpreted as compensating for this absence.

- 5 On arrival in Norway, adopted children undergo a rebirth as each is given a new name, new citizenship, new birth certificate, and new kin. This is an effort to separate biology from origin and to "kin" the adopted children into their parents' networks. Adopted children are distanced from their origins and incorporated into their new environment. Parents stress how easily children adapt to their new homes and take photographs that typify the ideals of Norwegian family life, at home on Christmas day or in the mountains engaging in outdoor activities. These photographs elaborate the message that, despite its non-Norwegian appearance, the child is changing into a typical Norwegian. Parents say their new child has "come home", meaning that the child has arrived where it was meant to have been all the time, thus downplaying biological and national origins.

- 15 Until recently, a transnationally adopted child was regarded as a blank slate. Today such children are described as arriving with a "backpack" full of unknown experiences and genes. As the children grow up, some of the contradictions of their situation become unavoidable, and parents and children seek solutions. Current thinking focuses on "roots", which may lead to "motherland" visits to the adopted child's country of origin. [...]

- 20 The stated purpose of the tour is to enable the adopted child to acknowledge a dual source of identity, not to find biological relatives. [However,] an underlying motive is the confirmation of the child as a "kinned" Norwegian person. [...] The motivations of parents and children for undertaking such return visits are complex and attitudes towards these tours are full of ambivalences. Parents may not be primarily interested in finding out about their children's birth country or past. Rather, their overriding concern may be to confirm the reality of the new family they have made.

- 25 On a return visit to South Korea [...] adopted children expressed a vague wish to see their "country of origin". Some said that they wanted to see the orphanage where they had lived before coming to Norway. The tour seemed, however, to be more important to the parents than to the children. In Korea, it was the parents who insisted upon the significance of the moment when first arriving at the orphanage, inspecting the child's file, or visiting the hospital of birth.
- 30 The children went along but were generally more interested in the shops and the food.

These return visits transmitted contradictory messages to the adopted children. The children in a sense return to their original identities. Parents bought daughters expensive silk Korean national costumes and commissioned calligraphers to draw the children’s original Korean names. At the same time everyday interactions with their Norwegian parents told them that they are Norwegian.

35 They are simultaneously Korean and not Korean. They look Korean but do not feel Korean. They cannot speak the language, know little about Korean history or customs, and are as uninformed as their adoptive parents. Many transnationally adopted people say that when they look in a mirror and see a non-Norwegian face they are reminded that they are different but, in Korea, they failed to feel empathy with people whose looks resembled theirs.

40 Thus, in Korea, the Norwegian families focused on places and objects, not people. They desired history without people – or rather without Korean kin, as they hardly mentioned biological relatives. When in the country of origin, roots became synonymous with place, food, costume, and biologically unrelated people.

45 Adopted children on “motherland” tours confirm their Norwegianness rather than embrace their origins because their personal and social identity result from being socialized within a Norwegian kin context.

1. How are transnationally adopted children transformed into Norwegian children? *[6 marks]*
  
  2. Why are attitudes towards “motherland” tours complex and varied? *[6 marks]*
  
  3. Compare the ways in which transnationally adopted children become Norwegian with the ways in which individuals in a society you have studied in detail become members of a group. *[8 marks]*
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