

KOREAN STUDIES OVERSEAS

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The purpose of this paper is to seek answers to three simple questions: What is Korean studies, who needs it, and who should pay for it?¹

Such questions are increasingly important in Europe, where I work, though their pertinence to the American situation appears to be slightly blunted by vocal lobbying and the public force of the more than a million Korean-Americans. The questions derive from the virtually unanswerable: "What is academia, who needs it, and who should pay for it?" Such questions have less place in Korea and East Asia than elsewhere in the developing global capitalist system, because of a traditional respect for education, learning, and scholarship. Yet, even if they and their attendant concerns may seem distant, Korean grant-givers ignore them at their peril.

Preludes: Korea in the West

The call to education for education's sake has appeared at risk at least since the publication of Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game*. In Europe, arguably led by Britain, higher education is increasingly seen as vocational training. Pleas for the spiritual advancement fostered through academic study go unheeded; the content of any course is judged according to criteria related to future employment paths. This is prejudicial to the humanities and arts—subjects typically associated with Korean studies.²

The apparent shift towards training-for-jobs has begun at a time when demographic changes and increased competition in the workplace has encouraged greater numbers of students to enter higher education. Within this frame, the post-Thatcher government in Britain has increased its promotion of a mercenary, "pay-as-you-go" attitude toward

¹ Ross King and I first asked these questions in a short position paper published in *Newsletter 1* (new series) of the British Association for Korean Studies (1992: 9-16).

² This is clear from the chapter headings in Han-Kyo Kim (ed.) 1980.

university education. Scholars are forced to justify their very existence in terms of registered full-time fee-paying student numbers (FTEs). Tenure, largely by default through the negotiation of new contracts, has been abolished. Statistical exercises record individual and group research, measured through lists of publications. Research is valued more if funded by external agencies, since this brings relief to the coffers of cash-starved institutions. Other EC states are monitoring these developments in Britain, and are likely to switch to the same track.³

The scenario has implications for fledgling programs in Korean studies. If it is difficult to find commercial employment for students who graduate in the field, then degree programs dedicated to Korea are unlikely to be promoted by individual institutions. Coupled to internal institutional politics, there are two potentially threatening tendencies among those European industrial concerns that operate abroad. First, expatriate employment is declining as the percentage of local recruits holding responsible posts rises. Second, flexibility rather than narrow training is considered important in many multi-national corporations. Similarly, British government agencies move their employees regularly, perhaps rotating them around East Asia desks. An argument can be made to promote degree programs in which Korean studies are taken together with other languages or disciplines: a graduate taught only to perform with adequate fluency in one small or medium sized country (such as Korea) may expect limited employment opportunities.

Further, the FTE measurement system brings considerable trouble for all area studies courses. On level playing fields, institutions should register the same number of students for Korean as for, say, economics, business studies, and anthropology. This is clearly impractical. But in the current economic climate, there is a danger that Korean studies will be perceived by host governments in Europe as attracting insufficient student numbers to warrant the employment of specialized staff. Again, there is likely to be limited scope for increasing local funding.

Koreans respond by indicating their increasing stature as an economic and political global player. This is correct, but assumes knowledge in the world outside where ignorance rules instead. The image of Korea abroad is neither positive nor enthusiastic. Indeed, the British associate only four or five things with the word "Korea:"

³ It is equally true to say that the British government has adapted parts of long established American and European systems.

- Elder generations remember the Korean war. The middle-aged have considerable second-hand knowledge about the same period, because the British government committed troops and resources to support the United Nations' force. Stories thus continue to circulate about, for example, atrocities and appalling living conditions in Korea in 1950. The focus, however, is on the conflict rather than the place. For example, a 1991 volume of British documents on the war contains scant contemporaneous background material—confined to just two documents, 6 and 12, out of 134—and only cursory attention in three minor documents to post-war development (documents 50, 55 and 57).⁴ It is almost as if the country at the center of the conflict, then a crippled adjunct to the Asian mainland, had no existence except as a game board.
- Something like 98% of British households have televisions. The picture of an impoverished nation has been reinforced through programs such as the American series "M.A.S.H." Reruns of old episodes continue to attract large audiences.
- Many recall the Seoul Olympics, but largely through telephoto lenses that were trained solely on the magnificent modern stadia. Sports facilities reveal little about the country. In 1988, the media offered sport, sport, and a few programs critical of human rights or focusing on unification endeavours.⁵ The potential loss of positive image-making was exacerbated by the commercialization of the mass media in Europe and the United States. There remains considerable difficulty in attracting media interest in Korea. Despite its trumpeted success, the 1993 Taejŏn Expo received marginal coverage in the international press, much as the Olympics attracted far less interest and produced less long-term awareness than the Tokyo Olympics had 20 years before. A recent (October 1993) ferry disaster near Puan, where something close to 250 people were killed, failed to make European headlines, and was con-

⁴ H.J. Yasamee and K.A. Hamilton (eds.) 1991. The editors note in their introduction that "The implications...of the Korean conflict spread far beyond Korea... The Korean war gave impetus to plans not only for strengthening the Atlantic Alliance and creating one in the Pacific, but also for giving the United Nations a revised security role" (page v).

⁵ For example, "Korea: Poverty Prohibited," produced and directed by Christopher Sykes, 20/20 TV for Channel 4 (1987); "Korea: A House Divided," produced and directed by Michael Macintyre and narrated by Simon Winchester for BBC (1988); "The Road to Seoul," produced and directed by Taylor Downing and narrated by Jonathan Coy, Flashback Productions, for Channel 4 (1988).

fined to a few mentions in general news digests.

- The British have some knowledge of Korean products, but an somewhat unfair image remains of cheap, poor quality goods developed with obsolete Japanese technology. Travellers arriving at Europe's airports routinely take a baggage trolley that proudly sports an advertisement for the hardly-known Samsung Corporation, but few would believe that Samsung is reputedly larger in terms of sales volume than ICI and the Sony Corporation together. This image is partly the result of Korean advertizing. Korean goods were introduced to foreign markets as value-for-money items, a strategy that gave short-term profits to both producers and importers but did little to develop awareness of brand names. This strategy has since been superseded, but Korean companies are still perceived as relative newcomers to mature European markets.
- British higher education went through rapid expansion in the 1960s with the opening of so-called "red-brick" universities. The attraction of the late Kim Il-sung has been legendary amongst stalwart Marxists in such places (even if the Marxist tag was never particularly apt). To some, Kim remained an icon by dint of the fact that he was one of very few leaders who chose to ignore the superpowers. With the decline of socialism, Kim's "utterly mendacious" and "ludicrous hagiography" (Foster-Carter 1992: 11) began to appear increasingly irrelevant. By the close of 1993, Kim himself was sidelined by the nuclear issue: is North Korea (the DPRK) developing nuclear bombs and, if so, what should the world do about it? Again, note the emphasis. Concern is focused on containing nuclear proliferation rather than on protecting South Korea (the ROK).

A series of reports commissioned by the Korean Educational Research Institute indicate that the English are not alone in having this uninspiring image of the country and its people.⁶ Until 1992, headlines from Seoul remained negative and tended to reinforce an image of political instability. Donald Clark sees this as a contributor to the fact that "American tour operators report an intractable disinterest in Korea notwithstanding luxury facilities, great shopping, and beautiful scenery" (Clark 1991: 146).

⁶ For example, Unit of International Comparative Studies of Textbooks (1988) and Ki Su Kim (1991).

This was well illustrated by the under-registration of American scouts in the 1991 International Scout Jamboree at Mount Sorak. Clark relays the typical image:

You have seen them on the nightly news: South Korean students hurling molotov cocktails at phalanxes of helmeted riot police. While clouds of tear gas swirl in the street the narrator says something like this:

"...Students battled riot police for the third straight day today. Furious at the ruling party's high-handed passage of a tough new national security law, the students fought for four hours on the campus of XYZ university" (Clark 1991: 147).

The interface between Korea and the world beyond remains weak. This hampers the promotion of Korean studies. Korean government and business agencies, to some extent learning from the successful Japanese manipulation of Western image-making, could adopt two strategies to improve the image of Korea. First, there should be many more efforts to influence opinion leaders and the mass media about contemporary Korea. Korea as a success story, in addition to the colorful Korean heritage, needs to receive greater promotion, but in a way which is designed specifically for—and probably by—non-Korean agencies. Second, and specifically in Europe since it is here that we lack any vocal Korean diaspora, funding is urgently needed to promote the teaching of Korea in secondary/high schools. Teachers, already pressured by fixed curricula and suffering from unruly student, need encouragement if they are to take any active interest in Korea. School library and resource centres lack good-quality, locally targeted, professionally produced materials, and funding is essential to address this inadequacy.⁷

⁷ At SOAS, I am the director of a Schools Project funded by SOAS and the Korea Press Center. In our needs assessment, we have compared a number of publications, prepared in America, and in Korea by the Korean Educational Development Institute and the Korean Overseas Information Service. Very few are useable in British schools in 1993 since they tend to be insufficiently attractive, are written in an uninspiring way, or are outdated. It is essential to improve packaging, perhaps working with new technology such as CD-Rom, and to target materials very carefully at specific age ranges and particular audiences. In contrast to the very marginal efforts of Korean agencies, the Japan Festival Education Trust, from offices in the London Embassy of Japan, last month (January 1994) distributed a free glossy, carefully targeted, geography resource pack to every British secondary school.

Positions: Korean Studies Today

Korean studies programs are young, both in Korea and in the world at large. Interest in anything but peripheral features of life in the peninsula came centuries after travellers and missionaries, from Jesuit priests to opportunist businessmen, had begun their explorations of China and Japan. To some extent, local Korean policy was to blame, as the Hermit Kingdom lived up to its name. Europe and America, blinkered by a myopic colonial vision, then allowed Japan to swallow the under-developed nation, at one point brushing aside attempts to achieve recognition at the 1907 Den Haag peace conference. Allied conferences in Cairo and Tehran during 1943 agreed to a trusteeship for Korea, in essence because Koreans were thought to be unable to govern themselves. In 1945, Roosevelt ordered two Washington officers—one of whom, Dean Rusk, later became Secretary of State—to propose a partition of the peninsula in order to divide the responsibility of taking the Japanese surrender. The arbitrary nature of this division, along a line with no distinct geographical features and little territorial logic, indicates that knowledge about Korea remained sparse.

The development of Korean studies as a distinct area discipline had to wait until after the Korean war. There were, however, a few isolated early experiments. Korean language was first taught at St Petersburg University in 1897, and the first European to hold a lectureship in Korean appears to have been Grigorij Vladimirovic Podstavin, whose post was developed at the Vostocnyj Institut (Eastern Institute) in Vladivostok (J.P.R. King 1991). There, Korean studies constituted little more than language research, and concern declined with Podstavin's death in 1924. Sundry monographs appeared from numerous European and American sources, including early travellers, diplomats, and missionaries,⁸ such as Maurice Courant in France,⁹ Waclaw Sieroszewski (1858–1945) in Po-

⁸ *The Korea Review*, *The Korean Repository*, and *The Korean Mission Field* all began publication at the turn of the century. These, and early editions of the *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch*, offer a mine of information, while James Scarth Gale summed up a brilliant career in his 1927 *History of the Korean People* (Richard Rutt's 1972 edition, complete with biography and annotated bibliography, is still in print).

⁹ See, for example, the *Cahiers d'études Coréennes* editions of *Etudes Coréennes* (1983), *La Corée ancienne à travers ses livres* (1985), and *Répertoire historique de l'administration Coréennes* (1986).

land,¹⁰ and Hermann Lautensach (1886–1971) in Germany.¹¹

A program in Leiden, Holland, under the directorship of Frits Vos, marks the real debut of Korean studies in Europe. This began contemporaneously with the Korean war, and the whole effort was still overshadowed by concerns about China and Japan. At the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, William Skillend became the first British lecturer in Korean. His field was literature. SOAS had been founded some 40 years earlier and had for a long time nurtured expertise on Korea's better known neighbours. Skillend, like his colleagues elsewhere in Europe, was isolated. In 1978, he looked back through an editorial in the inaugural newsletter of the Association for Korean Studies in Europe (AKSE):

A quarter of a century ago I arrived in Korean studies, perhaps directed thither by a series of circumstances entirely beyond my control, but fancying that I was searching for intellectual experiences which no one had ever had before. I found myself in a limbo, which was actually located then somewhere in the 10,000 miles of space and 100 years of time which separated the place where real Korean was spoken and the place where I taught abstract designs labelled "Korean." I picture that limbo now as a Korean Air Lines plane permanently poised over the North Pole. Gradually there came the consolation of association with others whose lives had followed the same eccentric path as my own. The first lived on the east coast of America, the second on the west coast. Then there was one in Leiden...some more in Tokyo, then Prague and Leningrad, and, coming closer, Paris. Eventually, fifty came to London [to the first, 1977, AKSE conference] and you were almost able to persuade me for a week that I was a normal human being.

In 1988, Skillend lamented that by then only two British university posts were specifically designated as being for Korean studies (1988: 31).¹² The situation has improved dramatically, but remains fragile. A whim, a breeze, from an uninterested university board, from a disappointed funding agency, would in many places cause the whole discipline to crumble.

Korean Studies in Britain

The British experience in Korean studies demonstrates the weakness of

¹⁰ See Halina Olgarek-Czoi's paper read at the 1979 AKSE conference in Schwerte, Germany (an abstract is published in *AKSE Newsletter* 3 [November 1979]: 7–8).

¹¹ See the translation by Katherine and Eckart Dege of Lautensach's 1945 report, *Korea, eine Landeskunde auf Grund eigener Reisen und der Literatur* (1988).

¹² This paper was first presented at a conference at Inha University, Inch'ŏn, in 1987.

the edifice. Korean is now taught at SOAS, Sheffield, and Newcastle. Programs at Cambridge, Hull and Leeds universities are, at the time of writing (January 1994), defunct. The small "Leeds Korea Project" consists of a collection of books in the office of a sociologist, Aidan Foster-Carter, while the erstwhile Korean language teacher at Leeds, Judith Nordby, has become a lecturer in Mongolian. Hull lost its political commentator on Korea, Steven Kirby, when he moved to Manchester Metropolitan University in 1993; its achievements in the field have been patchy ever since the economic historian Tony Michell departed for Korea in the early 1980s.¹³ The language program at Cambridge has stalled. Oxford failed to renew the contract of Mark Setton, then junior Korean lecturer, in May 1992, but is poised to re-enter the field with a new lecturer and a language lector appointed on the strength of an endowment from the Korea Foundation topped up with contributions from the Korea Research Foundation. Sheffield boasts a Centre of Korean Studies directed by James Grayson, with an additional lector and one lecturer (a second lecturer, No Yongkyoon, left in summer, 1993; his vacant post will likely be refilled). Newcastle teaches Korean language within a dedicated language center and in the Department of Politics two lecturers are concerned specifically with Korea, Barry Gills and Roland Wein. The University of Westminster additionally claims a small language program run whenever there is sufficient student demand.

Prior to his retirement, William Skillend helped establish a Centre for Korean Studies at SOAS. The Centre now has a staff of six—Martina Deuchler, Ross King, Keith Howard, Pak Youngsook, Jae-Hoon Yeon, and Robert Ash, covering the fields of history, politics, economics, linguistics, literature, art, archaeology, music, sociology, and anthropology insofar as they relate to Korea. An additional staff member, Eun Bahng, runs an external teaching program on Korea for businessmen and government employees. There is also a research assistant, appointed in September 1993 to work on a school project, Tessa English. The breadth of the SOAS program does not imply that area studies is healthy, for it is made possible because staff members also teach in the history, art, music, and economics discipline departments. Degrees are offered in a wide-ranging spectrum from single-subject BAs and joint degrees in Korean and either a language or a discipline, including subjects beyond the

¹³ After a number of years working with various Korean think-tanks, and the publication of a book, *From a Developing to a Newly Industrialized Country: The Republic of Korea, 1961-82* (Michell 1988), Michell set up his own consultancy business, Euro-Asian Business Consultancy.

direct expertise of the Centre staff (e.g., Korean and Law) through taught MAs to research MPhil/PhDs.

Only SOAS and Sheffield offer complete degree programs in Korean studies. Only SOAS has a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs. It is of note that in institutions other than SOAS, Sheffield, and Newcastle, the burden for Korean studies falls on scholars whose main focus is elsewhere, in fields like politics or Japanese studies. Apart from SOAS and Sheffield, Korean language is not taught by professionals trained in linguistics and language pedagogy. This is counter-productive where Korean is seen as a second language by students majoring in Japanese or Chinese. At the same time, it is the belief of SOAS staff that language programs without parallel instruction in culture and history are a waste of time, for students will not be taught how to *understand* Korea and Koreans.¹⁴

Britain does retain a strong interest in Korea. Cambridge boasts a gallery (sponsored by Hyundai) housing the ceramic collection of G. St. G. M. Compertz; interest in Korean music at Cambridge is continued by the octogenarian Laurence Picken. An audio-visual archive established there in the 1970s by Harvey Turnbull, which includes teaching tapes for the *kayagŭm* (12-string half-tube zither) and *changgo* (double-headed hour-glass drum), is now kept at SOAS. Robert Provine and Keith Pratt, both working on Korean music, are employed at Durham (Howard 1984). 1992 saw the opening of the Samsung Gallery of Korean Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, while sponsorship from the Korea Foundation will allow the British Museum to open a dedicated gallery in 1997. Outside academia, Korea also features prominently in an Asia Pacific Advisory Group promoted for the British business community by the Department of Trade and Industry. There is a parliamentary Korea committee chaired by Sir John Stanley, and an Anglo-Korean Society (with a counterpart in Seoul, the Korean-British Society). A number of parliamentarians and government advisers also sit on the Korea-British Forum for the Future.

The British Association for Korean Studies, begun in 1982, then, after a hiatus, re-established in 1987, thrives. It now holds bi-annual conferences alternating with bi-annual workshops, and publishes semi-annual

¹⁴ There seems to be a consensus that Korean culture and Korean behavior is difficult to understand. Books on etiquette, starting with Paul Crane's *Korean Patterns* (1967), indicate this. Even the British Department of Trade and Industry, to ensure that businessmen do not try to work in Korea as they would work to sell products in Japan or Europe, actively promotes ten commandments on "how to do business in Korea."

newsletters and the annual *Papers of the British Association for Korean Studies*. Five volumes of the *Papers* have so far appeared, containing 32 articles (together with book reviews) in the fields of literature, anthropology, sociology, welfare studies, economics, politics, labor relations, history, archaeology, music, theology, and international relations. These well illustrate the considerable breadth of local interest in the field.

Funding remains critical. Consider the example of SOAS. The majority of the cost for the current staff quorum of six is born by SOAS, not through direct grants from the British government. Despite generous support from the Korea Research Foundation, there is a large shortfall after student fee income is deducted. Since Britain no longer has an academic tenure system like Korea or the United States, *all* the Korean studies positions are vulnerable to budget cuts. The only sure way to ensure the survival of Korean studies is to encourage outside funding. Funding a permanent endowed chair is expensive, and a clear case has to be made to demonstrate that the support of Korean studies is in the interests of the Korean government and Korean business. But at the same time, funds are needed to sponsor student bursaries and scholarships. Bursaries have the effect of increasing student numbers and help to maintain and raise a research profile. Given that Korean tends to be taught alongside Chinese and Japanese, sponsorship should equal the potential funds offered to students working in, say, Japanese studies.¹⁵

Korean Studies in Europe

No comprehensive survey of the European situation has been attempted, hence I can do little but provide an overview. Above I described early developments. More recently, Korean studies have advanced with considerable rapidity since the founding of AKSE. Thirty-one scholars ap-

¹⁵ In addition to open competitions for research funds, there are a number of British agreements with East Asian nations. The British Academy operates jointly with the British Economic and Social Science Research Council annual exchange agreements with Chinese institutions for visits up to a maximum 24 man-months in each direction, in addition to administering research funds provided by the Sino-British Fellowship Trust. The Academy also has an agreement with the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science that provides for the exchange of three scholars in each direction, while the Japanese side offers three additional 12 month post-doctoral fellowships. The British Council also offers part and full scholarships, negotiated locally in East Asia for local academics and students, and supports some visits by British academics to Asia. Since I prepared the first version of this paper, the Korea Foundation has generously set aside funds to support bursaries.

plied for membership at the 1977 inaugural AKSE meeting. *Newsletter 1* (February 1978) records that between forty and fifty persons attended the first conference, held in London; the apparent discrepancy in numbers reflects the fact that some people only attended parts of the whole event. In 1977, seven papers were read on the chosen topic of Korea in the latter half of the Yi (Chosŏn) dynasty. At the 1991 conference, held at Dourdan, near Chartres, there were 119 participants from 23 countries. *Newsletter 15* (October 1991) lists the 48 papers and offers abstracts for 10. By this time, 700 copies of each newsletter were being printed. Several volumes of occasional papers have appeared, notably *Twenty Papers on Korean Studies offered to Prof. W.E. Skillend*, the fifth volume in the series *Cahiers d'études Coréennes* (Paris, Editions du Léopard d'Or, 1989) and *Actes de la 9e Conference Annuelle* (Le Havre/Zurich, AKSE, 1988). Until now, AKSE has not sought to initiate publication of a regular journal to serve European scholars, though a proposal was made to the membership at the most recent conference, in Berlin in April 1993. A journal would match the increasing tendency amongst societies to tie membership dues and funding applications to a regular publication. It would also support an organizational framework which many in AKSE resist and could undermine existing American and Korean journals operating in what is already a crowded market. The two major American titles, however, hardly serve the needs of junior European scholars. The forging of allegiances beyond Europe may indeed weaken the potential for Korean studies in Europe to develop a European flavor. This is a matter of language requirements, the lack of an international editorial team, and differing approaches taken in papers. As a consequence of this, *Newsletter 17* contained a questionnaire to solicit views on the desirability and viability of such a project.

AKSE held annual conferences until 1991, but now intends to continue with biannual events. This reflects the development of the association. Conferences are now large, and the number of papers crammed into a few short days precludes much chance of in-depth discussion. To advance scholarship, a second forum is also needed, and 1992 saw the introduction of more specialized workshops in a year when there was no conference. Two were held. One, "Religions in Traditional Korea," was organized by Henrik H. Sorensen in Copenhagen from 25-28 June 1992. The second, "Korean Shamanism Today," convened by myself in London on 10-12 December 1992, invited a team of P'yŏngan shamans and scholars, including Laurel Kendall (New York), Kim Tae-gon (Seoul), Alexandre Guillemoz and Roberte Hamayon (Paris), Boudewijn Walraven

(Leiden), Kim Seong Nae (Kangwŏn), I.M. Lewis and Martina Deuchler (London), James Grayson (Sheffield), Mihály Hoppál and Gabor Vargyas (Budapest), and Judy Van Zile (Hawaii).¹⁶ Workshops have two advantages in the European scene over generalist conferences: they can be designed to appeal to local scholars who currently have only a marginal interest in Korea, and they can be tailored to the specific strengths of established European, American, and Asian scholars. If workshops adopt strategies to involve both groups, then they will also tackle the perception that Korean studies is of marginal interest.

AKSE has tended to focus, though never exclusively, on the humanities rather than the "hard" social sciences. This, as I noted earlier, reflects the institutional background in which Korean studies programs have developed. It couples to the broad academic training considered appropriate by European faculties. Nonetheless, many European institutions have, at least since the 1960s, promoted the "harder" social sciences, notably sociology, development/planning, law, economics, and politics. There is a chasm between the discipline-based research adopted by scholars in these areas and the reliance on language or area expertise in most Korean studies programs which still needs to be addressed.

The AKSE council has always been biased towards European scholars, with the notable exception of Li Ogg. This is clear from the first slate in 1977: Frits Vos (president), William Skillend (vice-president), Li Ogg (secretary), Martina Deuchler (treasurer), Dieter Eikemeier and Stefan Rosén (council members). In 1992, the slate was Martinal Deuchler (president), Robert C. Provine (vice-president), Martine Prost (secretary), Boudwijn Walraven (treasurer), Vladimír Pucek and Henrik H. Sorensen (council members). With the melting of the European East-West divide, the 1980s saw greater participation from the Soviet Union and its former satellite states, and in 1989, 1990, and 1991 delegates from the DPRK attended AKSE conferences.

The expansion of the subject which has occurred in Europe, as in Britain, does not indicate a stability of strength. In Germany during the last

¹⁶ European workshops have not yet reached the standard now common in the United States. Both 1992 European events suffered from late preparation of papers. This meant that pre-conference distribution was difficult, and in-depth discussion was consequently not of sufficient quality to generate new understanding or enhance European knowledge. The promotion of workshops, however, is necessary if European scholars are to contribute collectively in high-level research: remember that central EC funds, and staff/student exchanges between EC institutions are meant to encourage collaboration of this sort.

15 years, for instance, only a handful of the over 130 students enrolled at Tübingen and Bochum have actually completed Korean studies degrees. There has also been some shifting of resources, stemming from the range of professorial grades and a shortage of suitable candidates. Dieter Eikemeier moved from Bochum to take a chair at Tübingen in October 1979. Werner Sasse eventually succeeded him at Bochum, but has now moved to a chair at Hamburg. Ingeborg Göthel and Helga Picht, senior faculty members at Humboldt-Universität Berlin, retired following German unification. Roland Wein, convenor of the 1993 AKSE conference, has recently left Berlin for Newcastle. A new chair in Berlin has been filled but projected chairs announced in 1992 at Regensburg appear to have been abandoned. Interest in Korean studies in Zurich in Germany's neighbor, Switzerland, ended, at least for the moment, when Martina Deuchler moved to London in 1988.¹⁷

One final point: comprehensive data on Korean studies in Europe has not been compiled beyond the reports of AKSE newsletters. It would be extremely worthwhile to commission a survey along the lines of the American reports cited below.

Korean Studies in the United States

On the surface, programs in American universities look stronger than comparable programs in Europe. But this, at least at the time of the last major report (Mimi Kim (ed.) 1992), is chimerical. American courses rely on large numbers of Korean-Americans to justify their existence, whereas Europe has no significant Korean diaspora. In America, this boosts student numbers, but may not be wholly beneficial. Korean-Americans are likely to be less concerned with in-depth research than with language study and background survey courses. In many cases, they study Korean as an easy elective. They rarely go on to further research, and do little to bolster and build resource and research strength in American institutions. This is demonstrated by the 1,000 or so titles since 1945 listed in *Dissertation Abstracts* with the word "Korea:" the majority are by Koreans studying in America who, on completing their degrees, return to Korea. Further, participation in college programs by Korean-Americans – who tend to already have some language and cultural knowledge – can dis-

¹⁷ Since their inception, AKSE newsletters have carried details of European programs and activities. Space prohibits further information being given here, and the reader is advised to consult back issues (No. 1 [February 1978] to No. 17 [September 1993]).

courage those with no Korean heritage. For a number of reasons, then, their participation does little to help the development of the discipline. And funding for Korean studies from American sources remains insecure without the political clout of the million or so Korean-Americans.

In the case of the U.S., unlike Europe, we have access to hard data. This was collected in 1987 and 1988, hence is already dated, presented at a conference in 1989, and finally edited and published for the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (Mimi Kim (ed.) 1992). What the published report says is of immediate concern. Consider the forward:

...Scholarship on a broad range of Korean topics remains unevenly developed... It is our premise that the relative marginality of Korean studies...is a result of the historical patterns of meager funding and uneven appointment of Koreanists to research positions. It is not because the study of Korea is marginal in and of itself (Kim 1992: ix).

Studies on Korean literature are said to be in their infancy, "in terms of critical study, it is safe to say that the field is wide open" (ibid.: 1). There "is an imbalance between quality and quantity" in international relations; "While quantity is overwhelming, quality leaves much to be desired" (ibid.: 2). And, much of this "suffers from redundancy." There is "a pressing need to encourage theoretically-oriented and methodologically-rigorous studies" (ibid.: 3). Politics that "goes beyond the journalistic and descriptive is relatively scarce in both English and Korean" and key works which try to give a more comprehensive coverage are now over 15 years old or are built on slender empirical evidence. Anthropological work remains field-based and of limited use to more theoretically-oriented Americans, while sociology is under-represented: "No monograph-length sociological study of Korea has ever been published in the United States (or Canada)" (ibid.: 13).

Historical research, excluding post-1945 studies by social scientists, is said to lag behind that in the Chinese and Japanese fields. Three reasons are given, all equally pertinent to the European situation. The first has already been noted: Korean studies developed late. One reason concerns the need to master "at least two, and often three, of what the U.S. State Department considers the most difficult languages of the world (Korean, Japanese, and Chinese, in that order), and acquiring a solid grounding in the history of China and Japan, as well as Korea." The third reason is the virtual absence of suitable teaching posts should a scholar decide to spend time researching Korea. "As a result, during the past two decades...

the field [has] had difficulty attracting new graduate students and [has] even lost a number of promising young scholars...to other professions" (ibid.: 6).

The number of Koreanists in the United States is estimated to be between 300 and 400, with an active community comprising about 150 to 200. In the 1986 AAS membership survey, 158 people gave Korea as their primary country of interest. Andrew Nahm, writing a few years earlier, noted that although 250 AAS members were known to be interested in Korea, "less than 30 of them are either teaching Korean courses or actively engaged in research in the Korean field" (Nahm 1983: 81). Nahm cites earlier data from Hesung Koh, who gives the number of scholars "involved or interested" in Korean studies as 103 in 1967 and 204 in 1975 (1983: 101). The number of Koreanists remains small, as we would expect, compared to those working on Japan or China.¹⁸

Korean studies hardly permeates American curricula. This is particularly clear from the uneven distribution of scholars by field and by institution, and is witnessed by the comment that many courses have been devised and/or are run by single scholars. The lack of prescribed lectureships means that most Koreanists carry teaching loads dedicated to the broader spectrum of their disciplinary association. Consequently, few institutions offer a broad range of courses on Korea stretching from language instruction to advanced studies in the social sciences. Even Harvard is accorded only two tenured positions in Korean. The report lists a number of pertinent concerns:

- 52% of respondents (scholars working on Korea) were born and raised in Korean, while another 5% are of Korean ancestry. This indicates that, amongst scholars, a higher percentage have academic credentials derived from native familiarity with Korea than those whose expertise reflects academic dissertation achievements.
- There is a discrepancy in the fields studied between those of different descent. Koreans are predominant in the disciplines of political science, language, literature, and economics, while Americans favor history and anthropology.
- The average age of respondents is old, at 51. 56% were 51 or older,

¹⁸ The 1992 report, citing Marius B. Jansen (1988), gives comparable AAS 1986 figures of 1,037 scholars interested in Japan and 1,521 in China.

indicative of the fact that many specialists will retire in the next decade.

- Few young scholars seem available to replace retiring members. Only 11% of respondents were assistant professors, and only ten of the responding institutions with graduate programs actually had produced graduates who had gone on to accept teaching positions.
- The age disparity, coupled to general pessimism about institutional commitment – 55% of respondents felt their position would be dropped on their retirement – and the decline in American missionary and military involvement on the Korean peninsula, suggests that the maintenance of academic expertise will become problematic in future generations.

The situation was summed up by Stephen Linton in an article published a few years ago by the *Korea Times* under the ominous title “Why Korean studies is losing ground in the United States,”

Most Koreans in graduate programs are international students who return to Korea with their degrees. Their classmates are students whose mother language is English who somehow survived undergraduate programs [competing against Korean-Americans] with their desire to study Korea intact. By the time English-oriented students reach graduate school, their morale is often a bit battered. Frustrated by East Asia’s most difficult language and wooed by other programs offering more classes, more language training opportunities, more scholarships and more employment possibilities upon graduation, many defect to Japanese or Chinese studies.

In no area is the crisis in Korean studies more apparent than in the graduate faculty. Let the statistics speak for themselves. This spring, for example, when a major university conducted research for a Korean studies position, about 25 people applied. Every single applicant’s mother tongue was Korean. In contrast, in another search to fill a position in the Chinese department, the same university received 100 responses from an application pool where non-Chinese were a significant majority.¹⁹

Korean Studies: Perspectives

It is apparent that Europe and America need experts trained in Korean language, economy, politics, and culture who will act as future leaders in

¹⁹ Linton is associate director of the Center for Korean Research at Columbia University.

the interface with Korea. The interface grows more important with each passing year for, despite the lack of local knowledge, South Korea is a major trading nation. It is likely that the world will soon face the prospect of a unified Korea, potentially, an East Asian superpower.

In the case of Britain, the pool of such experts is minuscule, and only one of those currently employed in higher education to teach about Korea was born here. Yet, if there came a time of crisis in Korean-British relations, or if Korean unification suddenly became a reality, it is clear from experience in World War II and the Falkland (Malvinas) conflict that the British government would be reticent to turn to resident Koreans for help. At such times, Britain will need home-grown experts or will find itself wanting. An argument can be made to suggest that the British were wrong-footed during the Korean war, when they turned to India and Canada for help, balancing this with U.S. intelligence information. In everyday communication, no matter how well-trained and knowledgeable a Korean is, he or she is rarely as persuasive or effective an interpreter of Korean culture and society to Britain, Europe, and the United States as a local-born scholar. We consequently need to train our own "Korea hands." Linton, although talking specifically of the United States, puts the point succinctly:

If the trend continues, Korean studies in America will be dominated by Korean-educated Koreans while academic communities that study other East Asian nations will be predominantly American-trained and ethnically diverse. The well-known Korean saying, 'A monk cannot cut his own hair', also applies to Korean studies. Obviously, Korean scholarship is an essential component in Korean studies in America. Nevertheless, without a healthy percentage of non-Koreans, Korean studies will be like a cart with only one wheel and its impact on Americans will be nominal.

Korea, too, needs foreign experts in Korean studies. Such people help Korea's international image. Thirty years ago, Japan began investing systematically and heavily in Japanese studies in the West. In Oxford, for example, Britain boasts a Nissan Institute. Europeans now do much of the explaining and interpreting of Japan to Europe. And they are effective. The pay-off to Japan has been enormous, for the space occupied by Japan in the average European's mental map of Asia is out of proportion to the country's geographical size.

For Korea, supporting Korean studies in Europe is doubly important. It must not be promoted only through ethnic Koreans, although this might help improve relations between ethnic groups, and may support trade ef-

forts. It must guarantee the training of non-Koreans beyond graduate level if it is to have long-term impact. Scholars must be sought out and encouraged to provide an ethnic mix, morally and financially, at least to a level on a par with those who study Japan. In the early 1990s, it is suggested that Korea spends less than 5% of the budget of the Japan Foundation. This is unquestionably inadequate. The Japan Foundation specifically targets non-Japanese: improvements in the local image for Korea similarly rely on people born outside the Korean ethnic diaspora. Germany, France, and Britain are now targeted by the Republic of Korea as trade partners, and there needs to be a sustained effort to increase academic support to improve access to knowledge about Korea.

Both Korean and local government and industry needs to pay for the development of Korean studies, because both need the expertise. It is essential, however, that any support be seen as an investment, because Korea will for some time remain too small a country, and too little known or understood, for Korean studies ever to exist solely by virtue of student demand. This is true throughout Europe. Hence, support should form part of long-term national strategic interests, rather than short-term and short-sighted concerns about student enrollment figures or media publicity.

When approached for sponsorship, the response of too many Koreans remains: "We are a poor developing country, and have no money." Or, when GNP still manages an annual growth well above Europe and the United States: "Our economy is in trouble; wait a few years." Korea's ambiguous status between developed and developing country has allowed it to side-step appeals for contributions of this sort. But no longer. If the issue of Korean studies and its support is of fundamental importance to the long-term image of Korea in the West, it should be treated as a matter of national importance with repercussions for Korean education, trade, culture, and foreign affairs—to name just four government ministries with a direct stake. Thirty years ago, when Japan began its major support for Japanese studies in Europe, it was still a developing country. Investment in the Korean field is needed now.

On the European side, industry tends to think that support for academia is a governmental problem, even as governments begin to apply private-sector thinking to academia. In America, the shift is from support for area studies to a concentration on domestic issues. On both continents an impasse encourages the flight of academic brains away from Korea. We face a double bind and we cannot escape the difficulty of attracting potential students to look at Korean studies: demand for area

studies is declining in virtually all institutions, as discipline-based studies increase in prominence. This is well reflected in student applications, and the SOAS experience is that combined degree courses (Korean studies plus a discipline) alone offer attractions to broader sections of the student body. At the same time, the shift to vocational training means that most students now have specific goals in mind when they enter courses in higher education. Few accept intrinsic value as a yardstick for the appropriateness of courses. As a consequence of this, the number of students who enter universities to "broaden their minds" is declining. So, although it may be desirable to argue that Korean studies can help to counter the hegemonic Eurocentric and Western orientations of secondary education and the media, very few university applicants will be impressed. In effect, the fault lies further down the system, in primary and secondary education, and in the image of Korea abroad. It is easy, in both Europe and the United States, for government and industry to play football with research on Asia, and university staff have very little chance of developing a potential market for Korean studies.

How then, should Korean studies be developed? In the case of Europe, at least, student demand will be limited while the above factors operate. So, in order to retain the support of European institutions, strength must be built in a few selected universities. It is poor resource management to have a lecturer in Korean politics at one university, a lecturer in Korean economy at another institution, and a lecturer in modern Korean history at a third. It is also poor management if different libraries within a single country duplicate precious Korean holdings. There has been a tendency among Korean funders (matched by the enthusiasm of single academic staff in particular institutions) to argue for expansion in many places, while ignoring quality issues. If this continues, Korean studies will be spread too thinly. From the perspective of host European countries, the discipline will remain fragile, and will have no protection from draconian budget cuts.

Conclusions

The most appropriate conclusion is to summarize four recommendations given in the report (Mimi Kim 1992: 50–51). These, when a European dimension is added, remain pertinent:

—It is essential to strengthen the field's infrastructure and staffing. High

- priority must be given to create new faculty positions, but more must be done to encourage institutions to maintain and strengthen current levels of staffing. Retirements must not become an excuse for re-deployment, but this can best be countered when a pool of suitably trained scholars exist who can take over research and teaching roles.
- Graduate training must be supported if the critical mass required to provide broad Korean studies programs is to be achieved. New forms of financial support are needed, including financing for language training, dissertation research, and advanced training and research. America has a pool of grants available through the Department of Education and the Joint Commission on Korean studies. Europe will need assistance to establish scholarships, since there are far fewer potential grants in place to support research.
 - Heavy teaching loads, coupled to the isolation and narrow specialization which characterizes the field, must be alleviated. Moral support is the key word here. Individual research grants, summer workshops, and research conferences can help at a practical level. These shift pressure from teaching to research, encourage cross-disciplinary work, and help develop networks of like-minded scholars. AKSE, in Europe, can and should provide a catalyst for this.
 - The recruitment pipeline for teachers and researchers begins at the undergraduate level. The pipeline for undergraduate students, in turn, begins at primary and secondary schools and is influenced heavily by public perceptions of Korea. In recognition of this, Korea needs to be pushed in survey courses, and more high-quality resources must be developed suitable for use at all educational levels.

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