

Special Feature

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SCHOLARS IN KOREAN STUDIES: AN ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION

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During the past few years, Korean studies have been receiving growing interest and attention from the academic communities as well as the general public, both in America and Asia. This interest has been reflected not only in the rapid increase in the number of scholars interested in and working on Korea but also in the number of academic meetings and conferences that have been held. More new committees and societies with the purpose of promoting Korean studies have emerged within the past year or two than ever before.

In this brief article, I shall attempt to answer such questions as: Who are these scholars? Where are they located, and what are they doing? The time and space allocated to answer these and related questions make it necessary for me to be more selective than comprehensive and more impressionistic than empirical.

Perhaps the organization through which we can identify the most scholars in Korean studies is the Association for Asian Studies. According to its twentieth annual report, "The Association is the world's largest and most active learned society developed to promote interest in and scholarly study of all the aspects of cultures and civilizations of the East, Southeast, South and Inner Asia." This Association began with less than forty members in 1948, but its membership has expanded to over 4,000 in twenty years.

In 1964, five scholars in Korea studies, Drs. Glenn Paige (Princeton), William Henthorn (Hawaii), Chong Sik Lee (Pennsylvania), C.I. Eugene Kim (Western Michigan) and Key P. Yang (The Library of Congress), sent a letter to the incumbent president of the Association, Professor Arthur Wright of Yale University, requesting that a committee for Korean Studies be established within the Association for Asian Studies. As a result, an Ad Hoc Committee on Korean Studies was established in 1965. A year later, in 1966, it became a standing committee within the Association. During the formative years of the Committee on Korean Studies under the enthusiastic leadership of Dr. William Henthorn, a separate section on Korea was established in the quarterly Newsletter of the AAS. This was a significant step forward, because for the first time, Korean studies could disseminate on a regular basis news concerning academic programs, conferences, research activities, and bibliographic notes.

The annual meeting of the AAS which is held every spring, has also provided scholars in Korean studies with the opportunity to interact and communicate person-to-person through formal panel programs and informal gatherings.

After a careful examination of its objectives and of the growing demands in the expanding field of Korean studies, the Committee was reorganized at its annual meeting in 1967. This included the establishment of a subcommittee to pursue various projects, the institution of an annual open meeting of all those interested to discuss important matters related to the field, and the election of the two rotating members of the executive board by the general membership of the Committee. These changes were undertaken by its new chairman, Mrs. Heung C. Koh. In addition a survey was conducted to determine the number and identity of scholars in Korean studies, and the type of current research being done on Korea. This survey did not include scholars in London, Leiden, Paris, Uppsala, Leningrad, or Moscow, where programs on Korean studies exist, nor did it include all those in Japan or Korea. Still, the Committee felt that the survey returns were significant, in that most of the active scholars of Korean studies in the United States and abroad were represented. An analysis of this data should shed some light on the major characteristics of the people who are pursuing Korean studies in the Western world.

According to the survey of the Committee on Korean Studies of the Association for Asian Studies in 1968-69 there were 103 scholars in 1968 and 143 scholars in 1969 who are interested in Korean studies and willing to participate in the Committee's activities. Within the year the membership increased over 40 per cent of the total. Taking into account those people who failed to respond to the survey, we can probably assume that there are at least 200 scholars currently interested in or working on Korea.

Who Are the Scholars in Korean Studies?

Scholars in Korean studies may be divided into four main groups: professors and research scholars; academic or government administrators; graduate students; and others of varied backgrounds. Between 80 to 100 scholars are teaching and/or doing research in American academic and research institutions. Of these, about three-fifths are Americans and Europeans, and slightly less than two-fifths are Korean nationals. The rest are Chinese, Czechoslovak, Japanese, Indians, etc. Among the American scholars, a considerable number studied Korean language and/or were stationed in Korea during their military or diplomatic services. Others came in contact with Korean culture as members of missionary families. Upon returning to the United States, these people pursued further studies on Korea and many of them are now professors of Korean history, language, or literature in the major centers of Korean studies---Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, California (Berkeley), Washington (Seattle), and Hawaii Universities.

Approximately 40 scholars in Korean studies who now hold teaching or research positions in the United States have Korean backgrounds. The majority of them are in their late thirties and early forties. These scholars came to the United States after the Second World War and successfully completed their education in the humanities and in the social sciences. A great number of these scholars are teaching East Asian or comparative government, international relations, or East Asian history. Many of these people are undoubtedly motivated by their wish to help develop their motherland in some way.

Most of the Korean scholars are fluent in the Japanese language and in some cases, Chinese, as well as Korean. Quite a few of these scholars have been instrumental in establishing courses and research programs in their own universities, where no such programs were previously in existence.

Unlike the American scholars who are teaching Korean history, language, and literature in the major centers of Korean studies and therefore are clustered in a few states, Korean scholars are scattered across the country, and in over 30 locations in the United States and in Canada.

An interesting phenomenon is that there are more associate professors in this group than assistant professors. This means that most have been in academic positions for at least four years or more. This fact may be interpreted to mean that once these Korean

(Continued from page 30)

scholars obtained some stability in their professions, they could afford to return to Korean studies, which were not usually the field of their main occupation. They are in a sense part-time scholars on Korea.

Some senior American scholars whose interest in Korea is secondary to their academic or occupational interests are also in this professor-researcher group. Their interest in Korea usually stems from their interest in comparative politics, administrative science, economics of developing nations, or cross-cultural and cross-national studies. Recently, interest in Buddhism and in ceramics has also led able scholars to Korean records, because of the contribution Korean studies can make to the knowledge of these fields. Anthropologists, geographers, and sociologists working on Korea are often interested in comparative study.

The second group is composed of administrators. They may be chairmen of department of East Asian studies or of international or area studies, or they may be curators or librarians of East Asian collections, etc. Some are officials in government or diplomatic posts. In any case, most of them are neither teaching nor doing research on Korea, but are interested in the field for other reasons.

The third group is comprised of about 30 graduate students who are writing their Master of Arts theses or Ph.D. dissertations on Korea. History majors are by far the largest group, followed by education and political science majors. Others are concerned with economics, cultural anthropology, and area studies. Both Columbia and the University of Washington (Seattle) each have granted over thirty Masters of Arts degrees within the past decade to scholars who wrote their theses on Korea. American University, the University of California, Georgetown University, Ohio State University, and Boston University are among others where research on Korea has also been pursued by the graduate students.

A small number of retired military and diplomatic personnel, children of missionaries and so on are also strong supporters of Korean studies. Some are engaged in Korean research, and it is these who make up the fourth group. Their research is on such topics as diplomatic history, Korean grammar, art, etc. Some excellent works on Korea of scholarly value have been produced by these people.

There are undoubtedly some scholars who do not fit neatly into any of these four categories but may belong to two or more of them.

According to the Korean Studies Committee Survey returns of 1968-69, scholars in Korean studies in America are principally clustered in the Northeast (from Washington, D.C. to Boston), on the West Coast, and in Hawaii. However, considerable numbers of scholars are also scattered all over the southern and midwestern states.

The largest number of scholars, numbering more than 40, are drawn from the field of history---followed by 30 political scientists, and 17 specialists in sociology or anthropology. Scholars in language and literature, economics, geography, and library science are next in line with respect to the number of people actively working on Korea. (See the table on the following page: An Analysis of Survey Returns, January, 1969).

One characteristic among the specialists on Korea and the scholars interested in Korea are their comparative perspectives. Except for about 20 per cent, all these scholars are also interested in other cultural areas. Over 25 per cent of the political scientists and historians are interested in Japan, and an equal percentage of scholars indicated their interest in East Asia as a whole. A considerable number of scholars in history and library science designated China and its Northern Border regions as other culture areas of their interest. Other major areas concerning these scholars are: Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and the Soviet Union. Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Burma, and Mongolia are also included in the list. Moreover, the political division of Korea into North and South presents an ideal case for comparative studies by various social science disciplines.

The Association for Asian Studies, Inc.
COMMITTEE ON KOREAN STUDIES

H. C. KOH, Chairman

Human Relations Area Files, Inc.
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An Analysis of Survey Returns
(January 15, 1969)

Disciplinary Breakdown	1967-68	1968-69	Increase
Political Science	29	30	1
History	28	40	12
Sociology & Anthropology	11	17	6
Language & Literature	10	10	0
Library Science	7	7	0
Geography	3	6	3
International Relations	3	3	0
Area Studies	3	6	3
Law	3	3	0
Eduation	3	3	0
Psychiatry	2	2	0
Religion	0	2	2
Philosophy	0	1	1
Economy	0	10	10
Unknown	1	9	8
Total	103	143	40

Current Research on Korea

According to the aforementioned survey, current research on Korea is being carried on predominantly in two areas: (1) Historical research on the period from the late Yi dynasty to the early Japanese Occupation, and (2) analysis of the power structure and leadership of post-1945 South Korea. Research on North Korea has also been increasing and about ten research projects on the People's Democratic Republic of Korea are now underway. Except for a very few scholars of the Silla and Koryo periods (in Berkeley, Rhode Island, and Hawaii---all of whom trained at Berkeley and Seattle), most are concerned with post-nineteenth century Korea. In light of these trends, the current project at Columbia University of compiling a volume on the Sources of Korean Tradition, which is molded after their series on China, Japan, and India, should prove most valuable in making reading materials on Korea available to undergraduate courses on Asian civilizations.

A few serious works on the Korean language, linguistics, and literature have been carried on at Yale, Hawaii, Washington, and recently at Indiana. A Korean-English Dictionary was published last year by the Yale University Press as the result of long and hard work by a team of scholars, and is a significant contribution to the field.

At the University of Hawaii, a wide range of topics, such as early Yi literature, archeology, the economic development of South Korea, technological diffusion, the North Korean political party, mental and public health, etc., are the subject of research by faculty and staff members and visiting scholars. Social science research on Korea in general receives most support at the University of Hawaii, whereas research on History and political science is usually carried on at Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, Washington, Pennsylvania, California, etc.

Within the past few years, a number of high quality works on Korea were published by the university presses of Harvard, California, Yale, Cornell, etc. These are mostly in political, historical, or language fields. A number of community studies based on field work have also been completed as doctoral dissertations in anthropology at Harvard University.

Since 1966, computer techniques have been applied to Korean studies at the Human Relations Area Files, in New Haven, to process a social science bibliography and to control data quality in documentary research. This method, developed in connection with HRAF's Korea Project, has now been adopted by HRAF for the processing of bibliographies of some 200 different cultures, and it is also being used by an anthropological project in Colorado. It has also been adopted by the Korean Bibliographic Center, and a National Committee was established in 1968 to promote its use in Korea. Another area of Korean research where computer techniques are being applied is, at Harvard, in analyzing the genealogy, chokpo, of the Yi dynasty.

Ethnogeographical studies and research on economic development and planning are receiving increasing attention from American geographers and economists, and are carried out at Northwestern, Hawaii and elsewhere.

Several bibliographies on Korea have been issued as Master's degree theses in library science and have provided welcome sources and valuable tools for Korean studies. These were produced for the most part with the guidance and stimulation of the Korean Section head at the Library of Congress. Some of the areas of Korean studies where urgent attention is needed by more scholars are: Art, music, dance, law, psychology, and all matters of the pre-Yi period. But such area studies can be developed only as cooperative ventures of scholars in all humanities and social sciences. It is hoped that more active cooperation between physical scientists and those in the humanities and social science can also be made in the coming years to speed up the development of Korean studies.

Until recent years, most Korean studies had shoestring budgets. However, recently scholars have been greatly encouraged by major grants for Korean studies from the Ford Foundation: i.e., \$100,000 each granted to Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, Washington and Hawaii. When a substantial grant was made by the National Science Foundation to HRAF to carry out a methodological pilot project, the Korean field benefited as well, because a Korean social science bibliography was compiled as a result of this grant. Other research funds have been received from the Harvard-Yenching Institute, the Asia Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, and the American Council of Learned Studies. Many universities where there are scholars working on Korea have undoubtedly contributed their share of financial and other help toward today's development of Korean studies.

As my thoughts dwell on scholars in Korean studies, I recall so many episodes related to them---some of despair and hopelessness and others of joy, excitement, and pride. To share with you these episodes and to account for all those people who worked so hard to bring about the Korean studies of today would be impossible in this brief article. It would require a much lengthier article---no, perhaps a book---to record in detail all that I consider worthy of mentioning.

I cannot help but feel that scholars in Korean studies have come a long way since 1941, when Dr. George McCune became the first professor of Korean history in the United States at the University of California at Berkeley. Dr. Doo Soo Suh made further groundbreaking efforts in Korean studies from 1952 to 1955 at Harvard. And what an exciting day it was when a Korean graduate student at Harvard Law School was told in 1952 by Professor Edwin Reischauer, then Director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, that he would see to it that a Korean studies program would be initiated if that student, Mr. Kwang Lim Koh, could find a qualified scholar to teach Korean courses at Harvard. What a rewarding and grateful experience it was to discuss Korea and only Korea at the two-day conference at Western Michigan University in April, 1967 and again in 1968. It was the first academic conference of its kind, and we owe thanks to Dr. Andrew Nahm, without whose leadership it could not have been held. And finally, how proud and happy I was to witness at the AAS Annual Meeting and at the Western Michigan Conference the performance of our young Korean colleagues whose presentations of their research were so outstanding and whose compassion for Korea was, and is, so genuine! (Continued on page 42)

(Continued from page 37: "Scholars in Korean Studies...")

Today there is an esprit de corps among the scholars in Korean studies and a sense of optimism and expectation for a better tomorrow. Thanks to the efforts of so many devoted scholars whose names that I cannot enumerate here, a solid foundation has been established for a brighter and more promising future in the years ahead. ---(March 1969)---

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