

The Asia Foundation and Higher Education in Korea

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- ◇ 이 글은 아시아財團(The Asia Foundation) 韓國 支部의 대표 ◇
◇ 인 Christopher J. Sigur 氏가 本 <大學教育>誌를 위해 특별히 寄 ◇
◇ 稿한 것입니다. 1954年 同支部가 韓國에 설립된 후의 活動, 특 ◇
◇ 히 韓國의 高等教育發展에 기여한 內容을 다룬 글로서 原文을 ◇
◇ 그대로 게재합니다. ……………<編輯者 註> ◇

I. Introduction

The Asia Foundation has been registered in Korea as a philanthropic American foundation since 1954. For almost thirty years, the Foundation has operated on the premise that the peoples of Asia must themselves overcome Asian problems, and that outside aid and advice can play only a supporting role. As a private American organization, the Foundation assists efforts encouraging the growth of more open and more just societies concerned with individual rights and opportunities and with broader popular participation in local and national affairs. The Foundation supports Asian initiatives to strengthen indigenous public and private institutions which contribute to stable national development, equitable economic growth, constructive social change and cooperative international relationships.

This short paper will attempt to illustrate the pivotal role Korean institutions of higher learning have played in the Foundation's efforts to achieve the broad goals outlined above. It will look as well at the continuing importance of higher education to the Foundation's programs, and to the potential for continued cooperative activities in the future.

II. The Asia Foundation and University Development

Much of the Foundation's work has been done with the institution and individuals involved in higher education. The reasons for this are both general and specific to Korea.

In any successful nation, universities and colleges must be at the center of national development. It is in such institutions that future leaders are trained, new technologies are tested, and new ideas are discussed and researched. Without access to higher education, it is difficult for an individual or a nation to successfully become a part of today's modern interdependent world.

In Korea in particular, education is esteemed as the means to success. Historically and into the present day, education has been revered as an achievement in itself, and the learned are granted great respect for their accomplishments. It is no wonder that competition to enter universities is fierce, and the percentage of the population attending institutions of higher learning is high compared to many other countries. Expenditures on education by governmental and private organizations are correspondingly high, and The Asia Foundation's small yearly program is but a fraction of this national spending. Therefore the Foundation has stressed a highly selective approach to programming in the field of education focussing support on areas where governmental or private sector support is unavailable for various reasons, and using its organizational flexibility to great advantage in responding quickly to innovative project ideas.

The Foundation's programming with higher education has taken two forms. The first has been the development of universities themselves. Especially in the 1960's and early 1970's, the Foundation undertook several major efforts aimed at the development of university administration and planning. Through such activities as the provision of short-term American consultants, or a major conference sponsored by Stanford University in 1967 on university development, or through its efforts to help plan the layout, design, and architecture of the Seoul National University campus, the Foundation was directly involved in the growth and development of Korean universities.

University development also took the form of helping major Korean universities to become competent in training faculty, both for themselves and for universities in provincial areas. The "Seoul Sabbaticals" program in the 1960's and early 1970's helped professors from provincial universities to travel to Seoul for short-term training programs in their respective disciplines. Professors from Seoul were also given the chance to travel to the provinces, and especially to Chejudo, to provide short and intensive programs both for students and for faculty. In addition, the Foundation paid close attention to the potential of institutional relationships between Korean and American universities, supporting and encouraging the development of "sister school" relationships.

Augmenting these general programs of university development were a series of activities aiming at support of a specific discipline or capability. Over the years, the Foundation has been involved with the development of legal education, English teaching, public administration, international relations, counseling, science and technology, and university extension programs.

For several years beginning in 1957, the Foundation brought to Korea a number of young Americans to advise on the development of college level English language courses. Some of the individuals involved have since become prominent as Korean specialists, and language teaching specialists. Through their work, prototype language laboratories were set up at Yonsei University and Pusan National University. The language lab at Yonsei in particular was developed with Foundation assistance as the national center for staff training and teaching material development for the rest of the country.

In the field of public administration, the Foundation can take great pride in the assistance

it provided to the Graduate School of Public Administration at Seoul National University. From 1966 through 1975, the Foundation provided such things as fellowships for faculty training in the U.S., research funds for individual projects, international conference and travel grants, and costs for faculty and student internships at governmental offices, faculty seminars, and training for provincial government staff.

Also at Seoul National University, Foundation assistance in the 1960's helped to popularize the concept of student guidance and counseling. The Foundation's support consisted primarily of the provision of an American advisor who spent eight months in Korea to help set up a prototype counseling center at SNU. Research, study, and fellowship support was also given to help develop this important area.

In another example, the Foundation worked intensively for almost 20 years to help establish and then strengthen the Asiatic Research Center. It has since become one of the region's foremost academic centers for research on critical international issues. Thus, the Foundation supported one of the ARC's first international conferences, on "Modernization in Asia," held in 1964, provided subscriptions to newspapers and journals to upgrade the Center's library, and provided fellowships for training of area specialists on Vietnam, India, Malaysia, and Thailand.

Through the 1970's, a major focus of Foundation work with higher education was to university efforts to engage in social action programs of direct benefit to the community. These included grants to help create strategies and materials in support of population and family planning programs, to assist universities in providing education and training to rural people in agriculture, food and nutrition, and to support community development and primary health care delivery programs based at the university.

One of the more enduring areas of Asia Foundation programming has been in the field of law and legal education. Since the mid-1960's the Foundation has provided a series of American consultants, training programs and other assistance to law schools in Korea to help in the development of curriculum, assist faculty and institutional development, and provide the legal resource materials necessary to any first-rate legal education. In particular, Prof. Jay Murphy, now professor emeritus at the University of Alabama, spent a total of 18 months in Korea making his expertise available to law schools throughout the country. Prof. Murphy authored one of the classic English language studies of legal education in Korea, entitled *Legal Education in a Developing Nation: The Korean Experience*. He and a number of other prominent legal scholars were invited back to Korea in 1982 to a Foundation-sponsored conference on Korean-American legal cooperation to commemorate the centennial of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

It should be noted here that Asia Foundation activities in all of these fields extend well beyond higher education *per se*. Training programs have assisted staff of government agencies and private institutions. International conferences and seminars have been co-sponsored not only by academic organizations but by private institutions and governmental agencies as well. In the legal field, for example, the Foundation has worked with law schools, the court system, the Ministry of Justice, the judicial scriveners' associations, the bar association, and prominent legal aid organizations. A pluralistic approach to national development has always been part of the Foundation's program philosophy.

III. Books For Asia

Underlying all of these efforts is the Foundation's Books For Asia program. Since its beginning 25 years ago, the Books For Asia program has distributed over 20,000,000 books throughout the region with over one million coming to Korea. It is the only books distribution program in the world that can provide the quantity, quality, and diversity of English language books necessary to help meet Asia's growing need for information and up-to-date knowledge.

The rationale for the program is obvious. The ability to undertake the objective, critical analysis of problems and needs for national development comes from a knowledge of ideas. Ideas come from books. Whether it is strengthening the university as a free and open center of learning, or giving impetus to the career of a promising young professor, journalist, or government official, or encouraging the activities of a private voluntary organization or research center, up-to-date information is essential. It is this that the Books For Asia program strives to provide.

The program is aimed not only at providing knowledge, but equally importantly at improving and strengthening the ability of recipients to handle and use information. Thus, books are not only provided to individuals to help them with their specific interests, but also to university and other institutional libraries to broaden and update their English language holdings. The types of books donated are not limited to any particular discipline. During fiscal year 1982, 28% of donated books were in the social sciences, 34% in the pure and applied sciences, 16% in literature and the arts, 7% in geography and history, and 15% in philosophy, religion, and other subjects. The needs of many libraries in Korea were met in one or the other of these categories.

The Asia Foundation's Books For Asia program receives donations from American publishers, colleges and universities, school districts, private organizations, professional associations, and individuals. Except for certain standard works, donated material must have been published at least within the last ten years, and most books are much newer. The donated materials are first sent to the Foundation's headquarters office in San Francisco where they are sorted and catalogued. According to a list of priority fields supplied by each of the Foundation's offices overseas, the books are selected, packed and shipped to Asia. When the books arrive in Korea, they enter free from customs duties and defense tax, under regulations of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

The program's beneficiaries are many. During the past year, for example, the Foundation has distributed new medical texts to some of the smaller provincial medical and nursing schools, it has provided basic collections of classic works in all disciplines to newly-created four-year universities outside Seoul whose library holdings are poor, it has given elementary textbooks on technical English to technical colleges and universities, and it has supplied Seoul's major universities with new texts in sociology, economics, business and other fields. Earlier this year, through the innovative use of a major donation of new textbooks published by Allyn and Bacon publishers, the Foundation was able to supply freshman and sophomore university students at several of the country's first-rank universities with their own introductory sociology textbooks. Individuals with special research interests can occasionally take advantage of special texts.

One of the most significant accomplishments of the Books For Asia program in recent

years has been its success in compiling special collections of hand-picked books for libraries and institutions in Asia. Over the past year, the Foundation in Korea has provided the Ministry of Sports with a collection of books on sports and athletics, and the library of the Supreme Court has been the recipient of several special collections of basic legal reference books on American federal and California state law. Working with recommendations from the Harvard Business School library, the Foundation also compiled a special collection of business and economics books, consisting of almost 400 volumes, which was donated to one of Seoul's major private universities. In the future, special collections are planned in the fields of foreign affairs and strategic studies, criminology and police science, mass media, American studies, political parties and elections, and other fields.

The test of the value of the Books For Asia program is of course in how it performs and how it is received. In both respects, it has demonstrated its value repeatedly.

Since fiscal year 1980 and through the end of 1983, The Asia Foundation has been operating its Books For Asia program in Korea with the generous assistance of the Korean Traders Scholarship Foundation. From a total of 70,849 books in 1980, the program will import and distribute about 76,598 books this year. An average of over 20,000 journals are also distributed yearly, further demonstrating the consistent ability of Books For Asia to select the quality and quantity of books needed by libraries and institutions in Korea.

More importantly, the recipients of the Foundation's books donations strongly support the Books For Asia program. Periodically, the Foundation undertakes an independent review both to evaluate its current status and to help plan for the future. Such a study was most recently undertaken in August of 1981. The results of that evaluation, which surveyed 79 university and institutional libraries, revealed the importance of the Books For Asia program as a valuable source of modern knowledge and information. It is the most important source of English language books for many libraries, especially in provincial areas. The evaluation concluded that the program was not simply "useful" but was in fact a "necessity" for many libraries in Korea. The Foundation will do its best to continue this program in the future.

This paper has illustrated the ways in which The Asia Foundation's past and present program emphasizes the importance of higher education. The Foundation's program has been broadly based, involving not only colleges and universities but also government agencies, private voluntary organizations, professional societies, regional organizations, and others. And yet the Foundation's projects with institutions of higher education demonstrate that the most fundamental aspect of Foundation activities in Korea is the nurturing of ideas, the training of new leaders, and the creation of pluralistic organizations representing the diversity necessary for successful national development. The Foundation has been privileged to work with Korean colleges and universities and to help them realize their long-term goals, and expects to continue this cooperative relationship in the future. *