

# THE WORLD KOREANISTS FORUM 2005 AND KOREAN STUDIES

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The invitation to the World Koreanists Forum 2005,<sup>1</sup> described as being “For the Global Network of Korean Studies”, came as the result of a response<sup>2</sup> I had sent to the web-based Korean Studies Discussion List on the problems facing Korean studies departments in the United Kingdom. (All such departments are, in fact, located in English universities, but serve the whole of the UK.) The theme of the Forum was at least in part a reaction to a letter by Dr Jay Lewis on the plight of Korean studies at Oxford, which had appeared earlier in the year in the *Chosun Ilbo*. My brief was to give a paper under the title: ‘The crisis of Korean studies in the UK: causes and countermeasures’.<sup>3</sup>

The conference seems to have been a rather last-minute affair (workers were still re-laying the roads when we arrived), aimed in part at launching a revamped Academy for Korean Studies (AKS), which was absorbing the old Korea Research Foundation. Two things in the background were Dr Lewis’s article in the *Chosun Ilbo*, which was being used by supporters of Korean studies in Korea to try to persuade the government to increase its funding of Korean studies, and a more domestic concern by the AKS to show it was taking seriously its enhanced role as a torch-bearer for the subject. The *Chosun Ilbo* report, which appeared on 29 March 2005, specifically linked the issue of Korean studies abroad with Korea’s strategic interests. It referred to the Tokto islets issue and complained that the more generous funding of Japanese studies by the Japanese government was helping promote an international view of the dispute that was favourable to Japan.<sup>4</sup> The following day an editorial comment followed up this report, contrasting Korean studies support unfavourably with Japan’s expenditure on promoting Japanese studies programmes overseas, which it claimed amounted to US\$500 million a year, or 100 times Korea’s 5.4 billion *wŏn* (US\$5.4 million).<sup>5</sup> The editorial asked: “How can we stop anyone from describing the East Sea as the ‘Sea of Japan’ in these circumstances, or from mislabelling the Dokdo Islets, which are undoubtedly Korean, as Takeshima.”<sup>6</sup> The *Chosun Ilbo* had also asked the previous day whether the Korean government’s announcement that it was

strengthening Korean studies through the Academy of Korean Studies was only hot air. The pressure was on the AKS to do something, and the World Koreanists Forum 2005 was the result. It began at the AKS's impressive site on the outskirts of Seoul with an opening ceremony that led with a keynote speech by Vice-Prime Minister Kim Jin Pyo. He was followed by the president of AKS, Yoon Deok Hong and other notables, all with simultaneous interpretation and a host of reporters.

The Forum was organised around four regional groups: China and Japan, Oceania and Southeast Asia, North and South America, and Europe and the Middle East, with a total of 28 papers on aspects of Korean studies. It was clear that there were big differences in the state of Korean studies in the different countries represented, but these boiled down to either supply side or demand side issues, or both. The countries suffering most tended to be those with relatively low levels of Korean support and low levels of student demand, especially where the national funding model was closely linked to student demand. In those doing best, support and demand were both present. For example, Thailand has one of the most extensive programmes, with 16 universities or campuses offering Korean studies; it relies to a considerable extent on support from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), an organisation not active in developed countries.<sup>7</sup> In the United States, the immigrant Korean community supports Korean studies by enrolling on Korean studies courses in large numbers and offering direct financial support. In other countries, for example, in the UK, no significant Korean community exists, or it may exist but does not offer the same support, as in Australia, for example. Participants in the Forum focussed on their particular deficiencies: lack of funds, lack of other resources or lack of students. Some objected to the use of the word 'crisis' in my presentation, on the grounds that this was overstating the problems in the UK. My response to this was, firstly, that I was writing to the title supplied by the Academy for Korean Studies and, secondly, that while some UK departments teaching Korean, such as at the School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), were flourishing, others including Durham (my own) and Newcastle were being closed, while others still, such as Oxford, were at that time under threat. This certainly felt like a crisis to at least some of those involved.

## **Background to the UK's problems**

A direct cause of this crisis was a change in the UK funding system in 1998–9, which took away protection from subjects by breaking the link between the quota of students studying a particular subject and the pot of cash dedicated to supporting that activity. This was presented as a move from a planned economy to a market-led one. Against a background of funding cuts in real terms throughout the 1990s,<sup>8</sup> vice-chancellors of English universities sought, and won, agreement from the government funding body, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), for a more

entrepreneurial, market-led approach. Universities would continue to receive their historic tuition funding levels provided they maintained absolute student numbers and did not make drastic changes to the subject mix. To cope with real-terms funding cuts, universities introduced tighter budgetary control, with many devolving budgets to departments. These were based on a department's actual student enrolment at the rates paid by HEFCE, in spite of the fact that HEFCE has always insisted its fee bands are 'broad brush' and should be adjusted at local level according to need and actual costs. The mixed message that this gave, on the one hand asking universities to function like commercial businesses in pursuit of maximum profit and on the other calling for cross-subsidisation, allowed senior managements wide scope for personal discretion in what they chose to support or abandon.

These changes allowed universities to close down subjects or departments without this having an impact on the historic tuition income figures, provided overall student numbers were maintained. Less popular or higher-cost subjects could be dropped, with the quota switched into lower-cost or more popular subjects. This led to a flurry of chemistry department closures, ostensibly as a result of low demand. Demand was defined in consumer terms, as applicants for the subject, rather than national or employer demand for graduate chemists. Only in the case of medicine was there still a planned approach, attempting to match the output of graduates to national demand.

Where Korean was taught as a full honours subject, i.e. at SOAS and Sheffield University, it continued to be eligible for additional HEFCE minority funding, and so was not affected at this point.<sup>9</sup> This system did not include departments teaching Korean courses making up less than 50 per cent of a student's time, as at Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and Newcastle, which received no earmarked funding for teaching the subject. However, in 2005, following a HEFCE report<sup>10</sup> into the minority funding system, it was decided to incorporate the minority subject funding into the block grants of the universities concerned, also removing this protection from major courses in Korean.

A further problem for intensively taught subjects, such as languages, has been the impact of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).<sup>11</sup> Unlike excellence in teaching, excellence in research as measured by the RAE brings substantial amounts of extra cash, in addition to great kudos. This has encouraged universities to focus increasingly on research, leading to a reduction in staff teaching hours and student contact hours, and favouring less intensively taught, 'library-based' subjects where staff can devote more time to research. Conversely, it has disadvantaged intensive teaching subjects, especially those where an external measure of teaching effectiveness exists and where a department has to bear the financial and research burden of funding non-research-active staff, such as language instructors. Each research-active member of staff can, in principle, bring in additional funding of over £30,000 per year for the duration

of the RAE period in question.<sup>12</sup> Hence a library-based subject such as history, not requiring intensive teaching, may attract a supplement of £30,000 per year for every member of staff in the department, whereas a ‘hard’ language is likely to have up to 40 per cent of staff as language instructors attracting no supplementary payments. The extra teaching burden also impacts on the research productivity of research-active staff.<sup>13</sup>

### **Making the case for Korean studies in the UK**

Although lip-service is paid to the importance of language learning in the UK,<sup>14</sup> in practice it tends to be regarded as a skill rather than an academic subject. This has become much more pronounced as the RAE system has redefined the standard of success for a department. A former chief executive of HEFCE was reported as saying he believed that language teaching was not an appropriate university subject and should be taught in language schools, not in universities.<sup>15</sup> My own vice-chancellor (a medical man), in discussing his decision to close down the Department of East Asian Studies at Durham, told me that the subject was like nursing: it lacked disciplinary methodology and would never make the grade in research. Since two of the seven departments of East Asian studies gained the highest 5\* research grade in the 2001 RAE, and none fell below a grade 4, this was somewhat wide of the mark.<sup>16</sup> However, he was reflecting a widespread view of modern language teaching,<sup>17</sup> which has fallen into a language centre limbo of low-level language-only courses in many universities. Traditionally, modern European languages have been taught in language and literature departments, while East Asian studies has tended to be taught in a broader area-studies environment, one which resembles more the teaching of classics in the UK.<sup>18</sup>

However, campaigns against the closure of East Asian language courses have had an effect. The ambassadors of Japan and Korea have made representations to the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and HEFCE, and the chambers of commerce have also lobbied. One result of this was the then Minister of Education, Charles Clarke, ordered an enquiry into the state of strategic and vulnerable subjects in UK universities in December 2004. This resulted in a HEFCE report in June 2005 that identified certain area studies and related minority languages as strategic *and* vulnerable; one of the three groups identified was “Japanese, Chinese, Mandarin [*sic*] and other far eastern languages and area studies.”<sup>19</sup> We can assume that Korean is included in this group, although it is not specifically named. HEFCE’s general position has been that there is little demand from employers for speakers of East Asian languages and there is no national need for a significant corpus of graduates with higher-level language skills (CEF level C1 & C2, Language Ladder 13–14).<sup>20</sup> Based on its own sources, the HEFCE view has been that British companies will prefer

to hire native speakers of the language concerned, and any expatriates will require only survival language skills. However, in an important shift at this time, pressed by the area studies associations<sup>21</sup> among others, HEFCE conceded that discipline-based researchers working on East Asia needed to acquire sufficient linguistic skill to be able to read original sources and participate in academic debates with colleagues in East Asia. It was no longer appropriate to support researchers working solely from English or other European languages for most East Asia-centred research topics. The initiative HEFCE announced was intended to remedy this specific perceived academic need, not to support undergraduate language study, which was already subvented by HEFCE's regular funding regime.<sup>22</sup>

Following a consultation meeting held in September 2005 by HEFCE, the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Economics and Social Science Research Council, bids were invited for collaborative centres in the identified strategic and vulnerable language areas. For the East Asian area, bids were solicited specifically for Chinese or Japanese, with a single winning bid signalled the preferred outcome, although in the case of Chinese the possibility was held out of two centres being supported. In the event, when the successful bids were announced in May 2006, there was one joint centre involving both Chinese and Japanese, based on Sheffield and Leeds universities and due to receive £4 million over five years, and a centre for Chinese only based on Oxford, Manchester and Bristol universities and due to receive £5 million over the same period. Korean studies did not feature at all in this process.<sup>23</sup> Given that Britain has considerable interests in Korea, both strategic and economic, this omission seems surprising and regrettable, but fits in with HEFCE's broad-brush approach of concentrating on what it sees as the main languages (Russian, Arabic, Chinese and Japanese) and letting the 'minor' languages (Korean, Persian, Turkish, etc.) fall to the individual institutions for support.<sup>24</sup>

## **Implications for the teaching of Korean in the UK**

In the UK context it is very difficult to see Korean courses being viable outside an East Asian studies framework, except conceivably in specialist areas such as postgraduate-level translation. Even the two institutions offering undergraduate degrees in Korean, SOAS and Sheffield University, rely to a considerable extent on recruiting additional students to take Korean as a subsidiary or minor subject, and offering courses relating to Japan or China to their students majoring in Korean as options in order to provide choice and reduce the teaching burden on Korean studies staff.<sup>25</sup> It is noticeable that, primarily as a result of pressure on staff resources, courses in Korean tend to be less intensive than those in Japanese or Chinese and the final standard achieved in the language is lower. Bench-marking will make this discrepancy more visible, and may bring problems for Korean studies units involved in language teaching. Departments

of East Asian studies struggle to achieve simultaneous viability in all three areas (teaching, research and finance) and with universities constantly raising the bar (demanding higher minimum enrolment figures for modules, higher research scores and higher contribution rates [i.e. profits]), it is difficult to envisage a more generous funding environment for Korean studies unless this comes from Korean sources.<sup>26</sup> In the longer term, the number of students applying for East Asian studies courses is growing<sup>27</sup> and to the extent that these departments are held back by low student numbers, these increases will help Korean studies too.

Although Chinese is now becoming more prominent as a result of economic and political factors, it is notable that in recent years Japanese studies have been more successful in recruiting students at both secondary school and university level. There are lessons in this for Korean studies. One is certainly the importance of marketing. Subjects do rise and fall according to fashion and image. We should not imagine that subjects are circumscribed by a natural level of interest determined by external or objective factors. Japanese organisations have been very successful in projecting a positive image of Japan, particularly among young people. For example, British schools have diversity requirements that often find expression in the project system. In these there is considerable discretion on the part of the teacher over the choice of topic. The Japan Foundation and the cultural section of the Japanese Embassy have been very active in providing project material boxes to schools on a loan basis, ensuring that many schools, both primary and secondary, carry out projects on Japan. Japanese has also had a particular appeal to young people, especially young males, interested in martial arts and animé or manga.<sup>28</sup> Korean popular culture has spread throughout East Asia in the form of the Hallyu 'Korean Wave', indicating at least a potential for export further afield.

### **Views from the World Koreanists Forum 2005**

The papers were arranged by region and in the event the issues themselves tended to have a regional dimension. Problems of funding were a leitmotif running through the presentations of almost all the participants, though there were differences of emphasis here between those largely reliant on Korean funds and those in the market economy system dependent on attracting students for their income. The former group especially complained of the difficulty of making long-term plans based on short-term funding. This had been exacerbated by the 1997–9 financial crisis that brought home to universities just how fragile some of the funding was, particularly for Asian universities heavily dependent on private funding from Korean companies operating in their midst.

### *United States*

Disregarding earlier Japanese or Chinese study of Korea, the United States has one of the longest-established and most extensive programmes of Korean studies outside the Korean peninsula. The earliest programme is said to have been at Columbia University, dating from 1932.<sup>29</sup> A paper by Edward Schultz of Hawai'i outlined developments at Hawai'i, whose Center for Korean Studies has "by far the greatest number of scholars of any department in the United States",<sup>30</sup> with 32 scholars listed. Formal language instruction programmes in Korean began in 1954 after the end of the Korean War and by 1968 were at a take-off point.<sup>31</sup> It was one of five universities designated as special centres for Korean studies (others were Columbia, Harvard, University of California Berkeley and the University of Washington). Ed Schultz indicated three basic requirements for a successful strategy: student demand, strong but consistent community support, and external support from Korea. His comment that "[s]tudent demand is at the base of any Korean studies program"<sup>32</sup> is a truism that was illustrated time and again by different speakers, especially from Western 'market-economy' universities. Hawai'i is of course fortunate in having a large ethnic Korean community to provide the first two of these requirements. As he says: "Korean studies has never had to justify its existence in Hawai'i."<sup>33</sup> One of the features of Korean studies in the US is its popularity with 'heritage' students from an ethnic Korean background, who form a high proportion of the enrolment on many campuses. Schultz illustrates his other requirements with the construction of the physical centre, a traditional building modelled on features of the Sudōksa temple and the Kyōngbok palace. This centre building was completed in 1980 with funds provided by the Republic of Korea, the State of Hawai'i and donations from the local community in roughly equal proportions.

A very different US perspective was offered in a paper entitled 'Controlling interests in Korean studies' by Denis Hart of Kent State University and Young Rae Oum.<sup>34</sup> This is part analysis, part exposé of the Korean studies scene in the US from the perspective of a non-Ivy League university. The authors consider the various interests: the Korean government, the US government, host universities, overseas Koreanists, and students in the field. The motivation of the South Korean government is clear: a "wish to use Korean studies to improve the images [*sic*] and political leverage of the Korean state in part by generating more knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Korea by non-Koreans."<sup>35</sup> The US government's interests are said to be even clearer: "to serve American interests as a hegemon first"<sup>36</sup> with the interests of the Korean people subordinated to this. For US host university administrators, education is increasingly "a commodity as opposed to a social or public service", hence their interests focus on "enrollment, endowments, corporate investments, and the 'bottom line'".<sup>37</sup>

Finally they identify a disparate group of individuals participating in the subject, who can be subdivided into the following. Firstly, a “Korean studies mafia” that controls access to the subject and its resources. These are “first generation ‘white fathers’ who recruit, mentor and anoint a selected few younger scholars, while promoting particular avenues of research, publications, dissertations and jobs within the field.”<sup>38</sup> These are accused of first-world-centrism and using the considerable resources they control to advance personal agendas. The second group, Korean Americans, often act as native informants and in their writings pander to the prejudices of their white audience by presenting Korea in orientalist ‘Other’ terms in order to secure their positions. “They could be seen as the spear bearers of orientalism.”<sup>39</sup> Native Korean scholars in the US are presented as marginalised and ignored by the preceding two groups, partly as a result of language and partly through their powerlessness. Within this group is a set compared to the ‘organic intellectuals’ of Gramsci, which is truly radical and iconoclastic in its willingness to reinterpret key themes in Korean history, such as the civil war and relations with the US. This paper also notes the importance of enrolments and the key role of ‘heritage’ students.

The effect of this situation has been to skew Korean government support towards Ivy League institutions as the best avenues to influence US opinion formers, but these institutions are precisely those that support conservative policies based on perceived US self-interest. The paper suggests that some such élite schools were strong supporters of cold war policies that have helped damage and divide Korea. The paper also takes issue with the Korean government and the Korea Foundation for showing “a clear preference for white scholars”<sup>40</sup> and bias against ethnic Koreans, especially females, in their grant-funding policies. In order to resolve all the above problems, Hart and Young suggest the development of E-plaza as a cyber-space open forum for interaction between Americans and Koreans on the basis of equality, not an orientalist unequal relationship

### *East Asia*<sup>41</sup>

Korea and China have traditionally enjoyed a much closer relationship with each other than with any other state, characterised by Korea’s use of the term *sadae*.<sup>42</sup> Japan’s colonisation of Korea and the presence of a large number of Japanese of Korean origin has changed this situation, but relations between both Koreas and China are marked by a level of mutual respect and cordiality that arguably transcends Korea’s other relationships. The area of China bordering Russia and North Korea has an Autonomous Korean prefecture with a Korean (‘China’s Korean nationality’) population of 40 per cent. This is the location of a private Korean (joint-venture) university, Yanbian University of Science and Technology, established in 1989 (Yanbian University is a national university founded in 1949). The re-establishment



of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea in 1992 has transformed Korean studies in China. There are eight research and teaching institutes for Korean studies, mostly founded around 1992–3 (within Northeast Normal University, 1992; in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1993; at Shandong University, 1993; in Fudan University Shanghai, 1992; at Zhejiang University, 1993; in Beijing University, date unknown; and at Renmin University, 1996). An exception to this is, unsurprisingly, Yanbian University's Research Centre of North and South Korean Studies, founded in 1989. Most universities focus on contemporary social science subjects—politics, economics, law and international relations—but Yanbian is again, unsurprisingly, more orientated towards culture and history, as are Shandong, Zhejiang and, to some extent, Beijing. These universities and institutions are either in areas with traditional strong links to Korea and lie in northeast or eastern China, or are leading national institutions which aim to be comprehensive in their coverage. Key topics for research are the democratisation of Korea in the 1980s, economic development, China-Korea relations and Korean peninsula problems. The centres are largely dependent on Korean sources, much of which is private Korean financial group funding and other short-term funds that could leave them very exposed.

The paper on Japan indicates that in 2002, Korean language courses were taught in just under half of all Japanese four-year universities. For comparison, almost all universities offer English and around 80 per cent offer French, Chinese and German, but only 35 per cent Spanish and 28 per cent Russian. However, only 15 or so Japanese universities have specialist units teaching Korean studies. While other languages were static or falling, the trend for Korean was upwards, with student numbers at the respondent's university (Osaka University of Economics and Law) rising rapidly between 2003 and 2005 to eclipse French and German, putting Korean third behind English and Chinese.<sup>43</sup>

### *Southeast Asia*

There were programmes represented from Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia. Thailand has the most extensive programmes: these date from 1986 and currently involve 17 institutions offering some level of Korean studies, including four universities offering Korean language at elective, minor and major level. The 17 have a total of 46 members of staff, 27 of them Koreans, almost all supported by Korean sources, principally the Korea International Cooperation Agency (which had 19 volunteers teaching in Thailand). One university, Burapha, is receiving support from 14 Korean agencies.

Vietnam established diplomatic relations in 2002 and has eight universities with Korean studies departments but only one, Vietnam National University: University of

Social Sciences and Humanities, with two branches in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, teaches an actual programme. It is short of everything.

In Malaysia, just one university, the University of Malaya, has a Korean programme offering a BA degree majoring in Korean, located at its Department of East Asian Studies. It is sponsored by the Korea Foundation, Korea Research Foundation and five Korean companies. It is short of staff, has difficulty recruiting qualified staff, and needs more funds to develop all areas: teaching, research, library, textbooks, staff and student exchanges.

The University of Indonesia offers Korean as a minor subject, and was due to start a Korean studies programme in 2006–07, but as of autumn 2005 had no full-time teaching staff and needed funding for everything.

### *Oceania*<sup>44</sup>

Although the Hallyu ‘Korean Wave’, which has seen Korean popular culture spread throughout East Asia, has not influenced Australia and New Zealand to the same extent, there has been increasing interest in Korea, but with economic and security issues behind this rather than cultural ones. The Australian government’s decision in 1994 to include Korean among four Asian languages to be taught in high schools gave the subject a considerable boost. Korean studies, which date back to the 1980s, went through a lean period from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, but in Australia there are now at least four universities offering three- or four-year undergraduate degree courses in Korean, and one in New Zealand, at Auckland. The biggest centre is at Australian National University (ANU), where the Korean Studies Centre was set up 1994. It is supported by the Korea Foundation but no other external sources and has a professor, three lecturers and a number of language instructors. Resources are excellent, with a Korean collection in the National Library of 45,000 monographs and 1,500 serials on hand and a specialist collection in the Menzies Library at ANU. There have been relatively few ‘heritage’ students in the past, but several universities are introducing courses for students from Korean-speaking backgrounds.

The general pattern for honours courses in Korean is that students take a single Korean-language course in each of nine semesters over three years, with five hours a week of instruction, plus a specified number of background courses on Korea or East Asia. Courses allow for a year to be spent in Korea, typically in year three. For example, the ANU course of Bachelor of Asian Studies (Korean) is the specialist Korean course with a required year in Korea, a total of eight language courses over the three years at ANU plus background courses. A trend noted is the diminishing teaching hours which have accompanied the greater emphasis on research, with universities now tending to reduce teaching loads from five to four per week for language courses to meet the demands of the Performance-based Research Funding

System. A common complaint is the lack of appropriate language teaching textbooks, which are felt to be culture- and system-specific to an extent that makes materials from other regions unsuitable for use in Australia and New Zealand.

### *Europe and the Middle East*

This section included papers from Kazakhstan,<sup>45</sup> Egypt,<sup>46</sup> Russia<sup>47</sup> and seven western European institutions. Reports from these countries touched upon almost all the opportunities and problems and all the economic, political and social issues facing Korean studies. There are half a million ethnic Koreans living in the Commonwealth of Independent States, with 400,000 of these in Central Asia, and thriving trade with Korea brings good employment opportunities for graduates in Korean. Hence the Kazakh State University of International Relations and World Languages has 150 students of Korean, and in Far Eastern Russia there are around 100 students each in Khabarovsk, Ussuriysk, Vladivostok and Sakhalin. These latter have very intensive five-year teaching programmes including high-level language work and extensive background study.

In many ways Egypt occupies a polar opposite situation with few Koreans, no university language courses and limited contact. Interest was stimulated in the 1990s by Korea's economic miracle and democratisation. How had a country which 25 years before had lagged behind Egypt by almost every measure suddenly leapt massively ahead? With minor exceptions (the first being a report by Boutros Ghali on Korea and the UN dating from 1951), Korean studies dated from the establishment of the Center for Asian Studies at Cairo University in 1994. Study of Korea focuses on social science issues, is highly dependent on Korean funding, and so far efforts to develop Korean language courses have not been successful.

In Western Europe two trends inimical to traditional Korean studies have been prominent. The first is a shift from an arts and humanities focus, involving the study of traditional Korea, culture and classical language, to a social sciences focus on modern language, politics, economics and business. The second is a demand-led consumerist approach to courses, which makes it very hard for smaller, higher-cost subjects to survive. Governments are trying to increase participation in higher education without increasing overall budgets, forcing unit costs down and obliging universities to look for economies of scale. Increased measurement of research outputs with financial rewards for successful researchers is also having an impact on teaching-intensive subjects. Added to this, in much of Europe the Bologna Process<sup>48</sup> is leading to wholesale changes in university structures, adding a further destabilising factor. It is countries where the market-led approach has gone furthest, such as the UK and Germany, where Korean studies has suffered the greatest cutbacks, while in neighbouring countries with a more centralist approach, such as France and Austria,

the subject is thriving. All of these changes are tending to have a negative effect on the student's proficiency in Korean by the end of the course. Sergey Kurbanov's description of teaching at St Petersburg State University met with incredulity. Had he been misunderstood? Was he really claiming that second-year students were expected to write original research papers based on Korean-language sources? Yes, he was. And what happened to those who failed? They are thrown out. Can you really afford to throw out students? A shrug. "Why not?" A different world. Students in the shortened post-Bologna courses of western Russia have 476 hours of Korean language tuition in the first year, out of a total of 619 contact hours. This compares with, for example, 104 hours of Korean-language instruction per year on Korean courses at Western market-oriented, portion-control-conscious universities. A further aspect of Russian idiosyncrasy is a determination to continue to teach translation, because this is a skill graduates need, rather than adopting the communicative-functional spoken language approach used elsewhere, including Korea. A result of this is that the Russians have to produce their own teaching materials.

## **Afterword**

Although the Tokto/Takeshima argument for an increase in Korean government spending on promoting Korean studies overseas may seem over-simplistic, it is not without merit. Korea's profile in many countries of the world is very low, especially in comparison with its neighbours China and Japan. Japan has been very successful in generating interest by targeting foreign schools with information and materials. Japanese popular culture has certain features that are very attractive to some young people, but Korea too has been successful in exporting aspects of its popular culture, at least to neighbouring countries. Furthermore, Korea's spending on promoting Korean culture abroad appears low compared to other countries, not just Japan.<sup>49</sup>

Only in particularly favourable circumstances, for example a plentiful supply of 'heritage' students (as in Hawai'i) or good employment opportunities (Thailand, Far Eastern Russia), does Korean attract large numbers of students. Alternative survival strategies (cutting back on teaching hours, linking Korean language study to more vocationally relevant social science courses, fitting Korean studies into an East Asian studies framework for more economical, bigger-group teaching) may help but with the pressures on universities to cut costs, the role of Korean financial support is likely to continue to be crucial for the development and survival of Korean studies in many countries. Given the relatively small sums involved, it seems like good value for Korea.

## Notes

1. Held 17–19 October 2005 at the Academy for Korean Studies (AKS), Seoul, jointly organised by the AKS and the Korea Foundation, and sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, the Korea Research Foundation and Samsung Electronics.
2. Posted on 19 April 2005 on “Koreanstudies-bounces@koreaweb.ws on behalf of Don Starr”.
3. This was published in the *World Koreanists Forum 2005: Proceedings*. Seoul: Association for Korean Studies, 2005: 201–12. I should like to thank Professor James Grayson and Dr Judith Cherry from Sheffield, Dr Jay Lewis from Oxford, Dr Jaehoon Yeon from SOAS and Professor Keith Pratt from Durham for their invaluable guidance and assistance.
4. Appeared in *Digital Chosun Ilbo* (English Edition), 29 March 2005. See: <http://english.chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200503/200503290024.html>, accessed on 18 April 2005.
5. We were told at several points in the forum that the AKS was to be heir to the Korea Research Foundation’s annual governmental subvention of 1.5 million. This caused a certain amount of puzzlement (in *wŏn* it was the equivalent of a good meal for a couple of merchant bankers) until someone questioned the figure and it was explained that this was in US dollars.
6. <http://english.chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200503/200503300024.html>, accessed on 18 April 2005.
7. KOICA’s mission is providing aid for developing countries.
8. In the decade from 1989 to 1998, public funding per student fell from a starting index of 100 to 63. (Data taken from ‘A tale of two countries: higher education “incorporation” in the UK and Japan’, a Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation Lecture delivered on 1 February 2005 by Professor Sir David Watson and Professor Fujio Ohmori.) This drop followed the Conservative government’s decision to abolish the binary divide between universities and polytechnics in the UK higher education system, and to allow polytechnics to convert themselves into universities, doubling the number of universities. The traditional universities, much better funded than the polytechnics, were forced to ‘level-down’.
9. A special HEFCE minority-subject funding system applied from 1991 to 2005, with earmarked funds available for a group of subjects recruiting broadly fewer than 100 students nationally.
10. ‘Evaluation of HEFCE funding for minority subjects: A report to HEFCE by Universitas’. HEFCE 2005/02, at [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2005/rd03\\_05/rd03\\_05b.doc](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2005/rd03_05/rd03_05b.doc)
11. RAEs, formerly termed research selectivity exercises, were conducted in 1986, 1989, 1992, 1996 and 2001, with the next due in 2008.
12. For staff in post on the qualifying date the university receives funding according to the RAE grade for the rest of that RAE period, i.e. for six years in the case of the 2001 RAE, whether or not the staff are still employed there. The 2001 RAE graded research as 1, 2, 3a, 3b, 4, 5 or 5\*; in 2001 only 4, 5 or 5\* attracted additional funding, roughly at the rate of £7000 per annum for a 4, rising to £30,000 per annum for a 5\*. A member of staff working in a 5\* department on the qualifying date in 2001 will bring in a total of over £180,000 to that department over the 2002–08 period.

13. In the 2001 RAE, none of the leading East Asian studies departments managed a volume measure of A (i.e. almost all research-active staff entered for the assessment), with most on B or C; for history at those same universities, half were A and the rest all B.
14. See [www.dfes.gov.uk/languagesstrategy](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/languagesstrategy) for the UK official National Languages Strategy. The UK government also supports CILT, the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, which in 2003 merged with the Languages National Training Organisation to form the National Centre for Languages.
15. Private comment to the writer by a HEFCE executive.
16. By contrast, in nursing no university achieved the highest grade and over 75 per cent fell below a grade 4. As a result HEFCE introduced a special system of funding nursing, and a few other chronic low-scoring subjects, for 3a and 3b levels of research.
17. This does not apply to departments of classics, which have successfully promoted an image of embodying the UK's cultural roots, and hence having higher value than 'foreign' modern languages; there is also the Oxbridge culture of regarding classics as a rigorous academic discipline, reflected in the epithet 'Greats'. At the time that Durham University decided to close down East Asian studies, part of the savings were 'invested' in classics, a subject perceived by senior management as having better future prospects.
18. In the case of classics, only three units out of the 26 assessed fell below a grade 4, and six achieved 5\*.
19. [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05\\_24/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05_24/) p.6.
20. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF) was established by the Council of Europe to provide a common standard for defining linguistic proficiency in foreign languages; it has six grades, A1 to C2. The UK Language Ladder is a 14-grade system referenced against the CEF. See: <http://www.cilt.org.uk/qualifications/cef.htm>
21. In the case of East Asia, the British Association for Korean Studies, British Association for Chinese Studies and British Association for Japanese Studies.
22. HEFCE is not willing to recognise that its undergraduate funding model, which pays universities the same amount for teaching all languages regardless of whether it is *ab initio* Chinese or post-A level French, is flawed.
23. Unlike Chinese and Japanese, Korean studies has been eligible for strategic and vulnerable subject undergraduate funding, but this is only shown as being provided to Sheffield in 1991 and 1995, not in the 2000 bidding round. See: 'Evaluation of HEFCE funding for minority subjects: A report to HEFCE by Universitas', p.32 at [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2005/rd03\\_05/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2005/rd03_05/). SOAS is subject to a separate funding system which recognises its strategic and vulnerable subject role.
24. The five centres receiving HEFCE funding for five years as announced in May 2006 are: 1. The Centre for East European Language Based Area Studies (University College London with the Universities of Oxford and Birmingham), 2. The British Interuniversity China Centre (Universities of Oxford, Bristol and Manchester), 3. The White Rose East Asia Centre (Japan and China; the Universities of Leeds and Sheffield), 4. Eastern Europe and Russia Research Centre (University of Glasgow in collaboration with the Universities of St Andrews, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Paisley, Strathclyde, Newcastle and Nottingham). 5. A centre studying

- the Arabic-speaking world (University of Edinburgh in partnership with the Universities of Durham and Manchester). See: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/hefce/2006/esrc.htm>
25. As of October 2006, the full-time staff numbers in Korean language and culture teaching units are: three at SOAS, four at Sheffield and two at Oxford. These figures do not include a number of specialists in other departments. For example, SOAS also has a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Art and Archaeology specialising in Korean, a Reader in Korean Studies and Music in the Department of Music, and a Lecturer in Politics specialising in Korea in the Department of Politics and International Studies. The SOAS Centre of Korean Studies lists nine members of staff.
  26. Dr Lewis's post in Oxford was secured through the agreement of colleagues in Japanese studies to sacrifice a Japanese post in order to support Korean, but such generosity is exceptional.
  27. *The Guardian* reported in early 2006 a 66 per cent increase in applicants for Chinese courses compared to the previous year. A year-end figure provided by the British Embassy in Beijing in personal correspondence on 29 September 2006 was that the latest UCAS figures for 2006/07 applications had "increased by nearly 60% to 788". Details for earlier years are given on the UCAS website, e.g. for 2005 see: <http://wwwucas.com/figures/archive/applications/2005>
  28. This has in some cases helped turn round the student gender balance of departments of East Asian studies from being predominantly female to attracting equal numbers of males and females, something that is attractive to all students. There was a 2:1 preponderance of female students studying Chinese in Durham in the 1970s and 1980s; in recent years for Chinese and Japanese it has been more balanced, though currently it is reversed with more male students.
  29. Michale Namkil Kim, 'The trend in the development of Korean textbooks in North America', *The World Koreanists Forum 2005: Proceedings*. Seoul: Association for Korean Studies, 2005:117
  30. See: <http://www.hawaii.edu/korea/pages/faculty/index.htm>, accessed 16 August 2006.
  31. Edward J. Schultz, 'Recent trends in Korean studies in North America: Korean studies in Hawai'i as a model', *World Koreanists Forum 2005: Proceedings*. Seoul: Association for Korean Studies, 2005:105–14.
  32. *ibid.*:112.
  33. *ibid.*:107.
  34. Denis Hart and Young Rae Oum, 'Controlling interests in Korean studies', *World Koreanists Forum 2005: Proceedings*. Seoul: Association for Korean Studies, 2005:91–104.
  35. *ibid.*:93.
  36. *ibid.*:94.
  37. *ibid.*:94.
  38. *ibid.*:95.
  39. *ibid.*:95.
  40. *ibid.*:98.

41. The following is taken from Yue Chen's 'Korean studies in Chinese universities', *World Koreanists Forum 2005: Proceedings*. Seoul: Association for Korean Studies, 2005:11–16, and Song Jae-mog's 'Recent trend of Korean studies in Japanese universities and development strategy of Overseas Korean Studies Association', *Proceedings*:1–9.
42. Meaning 'serving the great' and used by Chosŏn-dynasty Korea to describe relations with Ming-dynasty China.
43. Song Jae-mog, 'Recent trend of Korean studies in Japanese universities and development strategy of Overseas Korean Studies Association', *World Koreanists Forum 2005: Proceedings*. Seoul: Association for Korean Studies, 2005:1–9.
44. Based on Tatiana Gabroussenko, 'Evaluation and feedback on international support programs of related Korean institutions', *World Koreanists Forum 2005: Proceedings*. Seoul: Association for Korean Studies, 2005:59–69; Changzoo Song, 'Korean studies curriculum and development of textbook in Oceania: current status and some suggestions', *Proceedings*:71–80; Pankaj Mohan, 'Korean studies at the University of Sydney', *Proceedings*:81–89.
45. Nelly Pak, 'Trends of Korean studies in Central Asia and Russia and development strategy', *World Koreanists Forum 2005: Proceedings*. Seoul: Association for Korean Studies, 2005:173–80.
46. Mohammed El-Sayed Selim, 'The status of Korean studies in Egypt', *World Koreanists Forum 2005: Proceedings*. Seoul: Association for Korean Studies, 2005:181–99.
47. S. O. Kurbanov, 'Trend of Korean studies curriculum in Russian universities: development of Korean studies textbooks in Russia', *World Koreanists Forum 2005: Proceedings*. Seoul: Association for Korean Studies, 2005:235–44.
48. See: [http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/HigherEducation/EHEA2010/BolognaPedestrians\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/HigherEducation/EHEA2010/BolognaPedestrians_en.asp)
49. For example, in the 2005/06 fiscal year, the British Council received a grant from the British government of £186 million, or around US\$335 million, compared to the *Chosun Ilbo* figure of US\$5.4 million cited above (p.23) for Korean government expenditure. See: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/home-about-us-governance-funding.htm>.