

ESSAYS

Feminist Resources for Teaching about Japanese and South Korean Women

By Jan Bardsley

A keen interest in building women's networks at local, national, and international levels continues to inspire feminist activity in both Japan and South Korea. Centers for Women's Studies, activist movements, and feminist research programs are numerous and varied in both countries.

Education About Asia readers may easily gain information about much of the latest feminist activity and research through the national women's centers in Japan and South Korea.

The Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) in Seoul and the National Women's Education Centre (NWECC), about one hour outside of Tokyo, offer free English-language newsletters and other publications, and on-line resources that provide useful research tools to both faculty and students. This article introduces these centers, highlights their publications in English, describes their websites, and includes contact information.

As government-funded yet largely autonomous institutions, KWDI and NWECC engage in a wide range of activities. All these activities target increasing women's power over their personal lives and in public life. Since both centers operate on

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Photo courtesy of Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI)

the principle that access to information of all kinds plays a key role in empowering women, much of the efforts of both focus on the gathering and dissemination of information relevant to women.

A key part of this project involves using technology as a tool in feminist consciousness-raising and organizing. Thus, both KWDI and NWECC are building comprehensive databases, working to increase women's access to the Internet, and attempting to create a nationwide "electronic network" of women's groups.

KWDI and NWECC also encourage feminist exchange of information, opinion, and research by sponsoring domestic and international conferences. Both centers welcome communication from scholars, students, and activists abroad, and consciously seek to promote international ties, especially through their English-language newsletters.

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Contact persons: Mr. Chul-Mo Park, Administrative Officer, Information Center (for newsletter requests at fax number above); Ms. Sun-Hye Kang,

Program Specialist, Education Division III (for other queries, at fax: 82-2-384-7166).

For Internet access to KWDI's English-language publications, "Korean Women Today" and *Women's Studies Forum*, visit the database for Contemporary Women's Issues at <http://www.cwidb.com> or search through OCLC First-Search, an electronic database provided by many academic institutions, for ContmpWomenIss.

KWDI issues two valuable and quite different English-language publications: *Women's Studies Forum*, an annual scholarly publication, and "Korean Women Today," an informative quarterly newsletter. Subscription requests should be sent by fax to Mr. Chul-Mo Park at the fax number above.

Because KWDI sends the newsletter free of charge, the Institute prefers to send this to libraries, government organizations, and researchers. This suggests that *EAA* readers request a subscription for their campus library rather than asking for numerous individual copies.

Although the KWDI website is only available in Korean at this time, an English-language page is planned for the near future. *EAA* readers may access the English-language publications of KWDI, however, by visiting the commercial database for "Contemporary Women's Issues" at the Internet address provided earlier in this article.

Women's Studies Forum contains scholarly articles contributed by KWDI research teams and scholars. Articles in one recent issue (Vol. 13, 1997) point to the diversity of feminist research being conducted in South Korea. Studies highlighted in this issue, for example, include work on women in politics, the education of women prisoners, gender discrimination in the mass media, and a comparative study of traditional fairy tales. At the end of each issue, the reader will find the tables of contents of previous issues, dating back to the journal's inception in 1985, and revealing an especially rich literature on issues central to Korean women's labor participation.

"Korean Women Today," a most readable and well-organized newsletter, provides an excellent guide to the issues and activities that comprise feminist activism in South Korea today. Each issue reports on KWDI projects, summarizes findings of KWDI-sponsored gender studies, and describes feminist academic and political work throughout the country. Editorial comments by KWDI leaders and contributed essays explore topics such as equality in the workplace and women's access to information, bringing perspective and context to the shorter reports throughout the newsletter.

Using this format, "Korean Women Today" succinctly presents the scope of KWDI activities and concerns. Stressing the connection between these concerns and government action, the newsletter clarifies the policies under debate or in the midst of implementation by government ministries, concisely outlining, and often critiquing, the main points of each. The Summer 1998 issue, for example, carries a report on the "Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs and Women's

Policies,” considering how the new government should aid women.

Moreover, the newsletter informs readers of domestic and international networks of women’s groups, explaining how KWDI has worked to increase the participation of women all over the country in this kind of exchange. Recent issues, for example, discuss the success of feminist campaigns to elect women to public office, the work against domestic violence that centers around the Korean Women’s Hotline, and meetings by several women’s groups in Seoul and Pusan to promote equal employment opportunities for women.

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English-language readers interested in gender studies will find the *NVEC Newsletter* a useful way to locate information on some of the latest research in Japan. Fortunately, this newsletter can be accessed by visiting the NVEC homepage, a website that not only gives information about NVEC but has several English-language links to major women’s centers in Japan such as Wings Kyoto, the Dawn Center in Ōsaka, and the Aichi Center. Visiting these sites provides, in turn, links to women’s organizations of all sizes, though many of these pages tend to be in



Photo courtesy of National Women’s Education Centre (NVEC)

Japanese only. While NVEC also publishes English-language proceedings of its conferences and a wide range of Japanese-language pamphlets and reports, the *NVEC Newsletter* and the NVEC homepage offer the best starting points for gaining current information on women in Japan, making them especially quick and useful references for students to use in their term research projects.

The newsletter reports NVEC’s many activities, and in each issue, introduces a different Japanese women’s organization such as the YWCA of Japan or other women’s centers such as those in Nagoya and Adachi. The newsletter also includes brief essays about Japanese women such as “Changes in Women’s Awareness of and Participation in Politics,” “Teaching Methods and Course Contents in Women’s Studies,” “The Childcare Leave Law,” and “1995 Status of Women as Seen in Statistics.” The back page of the newsletter provides short reviews of new English-language publications on Japanese women.

The publication of *NVEC Newsletter* is only a small part of the enormous energies NVEC directs toward the collecting, cataloguing and dissemination of information about women. The Information Centre for Women’s Education at NVEC houses an impressive library of books, journals, government publications, newspapers and video tapes related to

Resources for Undergraduate Teaching

AAS needs your help. As most of you know, the Association has in recent years taken a number of steps to enhance the ability of educators to teach about Asia. Working in cooperation with the Committee on Teaching About Asia (CTA) and the Committee on Educational Issues and Policies (CEIP), AAS has sponsored panels on teaching at its professional meetings, awarded the Buchanan Prize for educational materials, and developed the new pedagogical journal, *Education About Asia*. These efforts have given a lot of support to those of us who spend most of our professional time toiling in the teaching trenches.

As a next step, the Editorial Board and Publications Committee of the AAS have recommended that the Association publish materials that would be useful to undergraduates. No one wants these efforts to compete with the fascinating materials already published both by commercial publishers and the various non-profit or “outreach” centers. It is also clear that the Association should not squander membership dues subsidizing the publication of materials for which there is no demand.

So where do we go next? Is trying to improve undergraduate teaching a good idea? Should we focus on websites or the printed page? Are supporting materials such as bibliographies the key, or should AAS try to publish materials that we can assign to our students? What disciplines most need help? What geographical areas? What topics?

Personally, I would like to see AAS sponsor a series of independently published pamphlets on critical moments in Asian history. Each pamphlet might include a carefully crafted introductory essay by a specialist in the field, perhaps a primary source or two, and a short guide to further reading. Each would be designed to encourage discussion by undergraduates in introductory Asian Studies courses, and each would be nicely, but cheaply, reproduced. Instructors could then “mix ‘n match” various pamphlets according to the scope and purpose of their own particular course.

Is this a good idea? As someone who has just volunteered to be the editor of the new “Teaching Resources” series, let me be the first to say that I am not sure. Since resources are limited, all of us who are interested in this project recognize our obligation to think through all the issues before proceeding further. Most of all, we need you to register your hopes and wishes by taking the time to call, write, or e-mail me at the address below. Our Association has come up with an exciting initiative. *Let’s make it work!*

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women. Though most are in Japanese, quite a few English-language and other Western-language materials on gender are also catalogued here. The Information Centre also operates a large database devoted to information on women that can be accessed nationwide in Japan through WINET (Women's Information Network System). The Information Centre uses this database to provide a reference service, answering the inquiries for information that come from telephone, letter, and visitors to NWECC.

Lastly, *EAA* readers who wish to do gender-related research in Japan should be aware that they can apply to stay at the spacious hotel-like accommodations offered by NWECC. At 1,400 yen per night, room rates are well below hotel prices. Readers wishing to use these facilities should contact NWECC well in advance of their planned stay, the official requirement being "six months to ten days" before the beginning of the intended stay.

KWDC and NWECC offer ways for those who teach about Japan and South Korea to introduce feminist concerns and activities in these countries to our classrooms. KWDC and NWECC are making every effort to ensure that the information they gather is easily accessible, indisputably current, and highly relevant to feminist work domestically and internationally. Both centers encourage the use of their resources and welcome suggestions for enhanced international exchange. ■

Developing a Resource Guide

ASIA IN CONNECTICUT: A Catalogue of Asian Resources in Connecticut and Environs

SECOND EDITION

WEST HARTFORD, CT: UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD, 1996

WWW.ASIACCT.COM

By Colleen A. Kelly and Bruce J. Esposito

A*sia in Connecticut* was developed as a resource guide for educators at all academic levels. The first edition of this directory, originally published by the University of Connecticut, appeared in 1980.¹ The second edition is completely revised to reflect current technologies and methodologies in research and communication. It was designed as a user friendly reference for Asian studies in Connecticut and neighboring states. From the beginning of the second edition, we hoped that other regions of the country would develop similar guides to assist teachers to locate available resources.

By discussing *Asia in Connecticut* we intend to provide an outline which may be adapted for other regions. This essay on *Asia in Connecticut* is intended to both inform Northeastern teachers about this resource and to stimulate educators in other regions to develop similar directories.

Financial support for developing the second edition of *Asia in Connecticut* came from the Council of Conferences of the Association for Asian Studies. The COC offers regional grants annually. Assistance in research, typing and publication was provided by the University of Hartford and by individual scholars interested in the project. The original distribution of the volume was to teachers attending the Committee on Teaching Asia sessions at the

regional meeting of the New England Association for Asian Studies.

The table of contents suggests the variety of categories covered by the guide. The majority of the topics focus on the delivery of information and resources. These topics include information on libraries, educational centers, outreach centers, museums and performing arts organizations. In addition, there are essays which offer teaching suggestions as well as a section on keeping up to date on Asia.

Under the heading Sources of Information on Asia, subdivisions provide data on a variety of such sources. These include academic societies and organizations, book shops which specialize in Asia, addresses of embassies and consulates, as well as United Nations missions. Additionally, state Social Studies supervisors in each of the New England states are identified, as well as exchange programs and how to find translators and language schools.

The last major section identifies Asian scholars in Connecticut. The list of Asian scholars in Connecticut is based on the Association for Asian Studies subscription list. It provides name and e-mail addresses of academics who can often provide advice or a free lecture. This list of scholars is divided into area classifications of China and Inner Asia, Northeast Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia. To make it easier for teachers to

find scholars in their own vicinity, scholars are listed by counties as well as by discipline.

Educational centers, libraries and outreach centers have books, a variety of specialized periodicals, maps and videos which can be borrowed for classroom use. Some resource centers also supply kits which contain artifacts or items such as calligraphy materials to introduce students to a more tangible aspect of learning. Resource personnel are available to advise about both nonprint material and new monographs. Often these centers can supply speakers to come to the classroom to demonstrate special techniques or lecture on a specific or general topic.

Museums both in Connecticut and adjacent areas can also provide a venue for a field trip to let students see relevant art exhibits, costumes, export products, folk art, or crafts. Addresses for Connecticut and nearby museums in New York and Massachusetts are included in the guide. One example which illustrates the wealth of the region is located in Milton, Massachusetts in The Captain Robert Bennet Forbes House. It portrays the U.S. China trade with actual export items.

The Peabody Museum in Salem, Massachusetts brings the student in contact with the clipper ships that plied the seas bringing the east coast of the United States into contact with Asia in the nineteenth century. Museum educators and docents lead students through exhibits on site, and will at times bring exhibits to the classroom. This section is annotated to provide readers with information on the major attraction of each museum.

Teachers certainly know that experience is how we learn best. Almost every region of the country has ethnic restaurants which provide a culinary insight into that culture. Regional foods highlight geographic diversity within a country or area. A restaurant