

The History of African Studies in Korea – Forty Years of Its Academic Development

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Introduction

The first institutionalization of African Studies in South Korea began in 1977 when a group of academics, diplomats, and other professionals agreed to set up a consultative body to the government's decision-making process on Africa-related issues. This consultative body was embodied in the Institute of African Affairs at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (IAA-HUFS). Later on, IAA-HUFS changed its name to the Institute of African Studies and turned its attention to a more academic orientation. The Korean Association of African Studies (KAAS), a national level academic association, was founded in 1982, and the pedagogic institute of African languages (Kiswahili) took its first step in 1983. It was these institutes which truly laid the foundation for African Studies in Korea.¹ This is remarkable because three major Africa-related institutes, which have led the development of African Studies, laid their foundations within a decade from 1977.

There has been a long phase since then, and again from the advent of millennium, where either new institutes or transformed institutes have begun to emerge as some universities and para-governmental institutions partake in African Studies, thus expanding and diversifying the boundary of the study. One of the most recent institutionalizations was the Korea-Africa Center, a consultative institute which is affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. First established in 2015 under the name of Korea-Africa Future Strategy Center, it was restructured in 2018 as an independent foundation.

¹ For the remainder of this article, the term 'Korea' will be used to refer both to South Korea and the Republic of Korea.

Although not focusing solely on African issues, a number of research institutes began to strategically approach African issues. For instance, the Korean Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP), a para-governmental research institute focusing on economic investment and cooperation between Korea and the international societies, carries out measurable policy-based research on Africa. After 2000, civil societies and NGOs related to Africa have begun to grow rapidly and to engage diverse social and cultural activities with their counterparts in Africa. Today, African Studies in Korea has shown remarkable progress, although it still remains in a marginalized position compared to other major Area Studies.

Another interesting development of African Studies in Korea since 2000 in particular is that a number of French departments began to branch out into African Studies, mainly focusing on French-speaking African societies, especially in Maghreb countries. Yet another intriguing feature is that Korean literature critics started to study African literature, searching for an alternative way of interpretation, utilizing the methodology of Korean literature criticism. It will be interesting to see how this field will develop further.

As mentioned before, the way African Studies has developed so far in Korea is quite impressive, given the insignificant historical and practical relations between Korea and the African continent. Additionally, there are some positive indications for further development as the government has begun to provide a reasonable amount of research funds for African Studies. The most recent is the bill passed in the national parliament in 2016 to promote 54 global 'strategic languages' appointed by the government, five of which are African languages. Of course, the state of research is not comparable to that in Western countries that have a long academic history of African Studies, or even to that in some major Asian countries.

Despite all these positive achievements, the prospects of Korean African Studies are not rosy. There are alarming voices from within the academic cycle of African Studies and, if it is not overly pessimistic, the current situation of African Studies is not satisfactory. I would, with a mix of optimism and pessimism, argue that the current situation of Korean African Studies is in a state of stagnation, or, at best, progressing very slowly.

This paper is divided into three sections. In the first part, I will briefly sketch the history of Korean African Studies, and, for this purpose, the part will be divided into three consecutive phases. Firstly, from the 1960s

to 1982, secondly, from 1983 to 2006, and lastly from 2007 onwards. This division of phases is based on national interests in Africa that have developed according to diplomatic activities, i.e., presidential visits to African countries, or the establishment of major research and educational institutions accordingly. In the second section, I will show the trend of Korean African Studies by analysing two major Africa-related journals published in Korea and other major publications. The analysis will clearly show the balance between African linguistics and literature on the one side, and political science and economics on the other in Korean African Studies. I will rely on four previous reviews on Korean African Studies which were published by Park (1996), Choi (2006), Han (2007), and Hong (2016) respectively. The section is followed by the challenges and some suggestions, which will diagnose the confronted problem of contemporary Korean African Studies.

History of African Studies in Korea

In this section, I am going to discuss the history of Korean African Studies, sub-divided into three phases: the first (1960s~1982), the second (1983~2006) and the third (2006~).² This division is based on the increase of the national concerns in regards to the African continent and the subsequent implication of foreign policies towards Africa. Two presidential visits to African countries in 1982 and 2006 respectively were particularly crucial, as these visits resulted in the introduction of Africa-related research and educational institutions. A striking feature of these phases is that national concerns in regard to the African continent are implemented at private universities. In other words, private universities, not national universities, and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in particular, have taken initiatives for African Studies. Another feature of these phases is that, although there has been institutional development on African Studies, public knowledge and recognition of Africa and African Studies are virtually non-existent. This public ignorance is one of the major elements which has hindered the development of African

² Park 1996: 4 categorises the history of Korean African Studies into two: the first stage from 1955 to 1980, and the second stage from 1980 to 1990. Similarly, Han 2013: 171 attempts to distinguish it into the first generation who had laid a foundation of African Studies, and the second generation who has developed its own academic identity as Africanists.

Studies in Korea. It is quite interesting to observe that the development of African Studies runs in parallel with the development of political and diplomatic relations between Korea and African countries.

The First Phase (1960s~1982)

The diplomatic and political relations between Korea and African countries were feeble in this period, since most of the African countries preferred to build up a relationship with North Korea. Economic relations also only existed with a very limited number of African countries, i.e., Kenya and Nigeria. The problems arose from Korea's internal situation: Korea was an underdeveloped country in this period and was preoccupied with building a nation from the debris left by the Korean War, which ended in 1953. The economic level of Korea in the 1960s was no better than that in some African countries; Korea also was one of the major recipients of international development assistance from the international community. Nevertheless, the Korean government tried to extend its diplomatic relations to newly independent African countries to gain support for joining the UN, something which was only realized in 1991.

African Studies in this phase was in an 'embryonic' state. According to Cho (2012: 141), the first academic article on African Studies appeared in 1955 (Han 1955)³ and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published its first Africa-related report in 1959. The first book publication on Africa was published in 1972 under the title *African Politics*. It has been called the founding book of African Area Studies. Park (1996) claims that two different styles of documentation on Africa have been published in this period. The first one is the academic publication, published and circulated in academia in the form of journals, books, and thesis. The second one is 'regular' reports on African countries and economics which were issued by governmental and para-governmental institutes, such as the Export-Import Bank of Korea (Exim Bank), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and so on.

In this phase, special attention should be paid to the fact that in 1977 the first academic institute on African Studies was established at HUFSS. The institute was initiated by Wontak Park, who was at that point the

³ The article is titled 'The Concern of France over Violence in Africa' and was published in Korean.

head of the Turkish department.⁴ How exactly this came about is not entirely clear. He was chair of the IAA until he resigned in 1998. However, it is interesting to note that no single 'real' Africanist⁵ was involved in the initiation of the IAA. Presumably, Professor Park was a member of the consultative body to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for advising national policies on African countries. However, the IAA had only a limited consulting role to the government and was focused more on academic activities.

The IAA opened up a master course and produced some graduates.⁶ With most of its professors coming from the department of Middle Eastern Studies, the IAA's main area of focus was for the most part confined to Northern Africa, and more specifically, Maghreb countries. The methodology of political sciences and economics were utilized as the core analytical tools. In this sense, the IAA might not be seen as a fully-fledged and recognized Institute for African Studies, since its research boundary and academic disciplines remained within limited areas.

The year 1982 was a turning point both for the diplomatic relations of Korea to the African continent and for African Studies. Three events, which were closely related to each other, took place in that year. The first visit of a Korean president to African countries (specifically Kenya, Nigeria, Gabon, and Senegal) was made in August of 1982 (Anon 1982a; Anon 1982c; Anon 1982d). A month earlier, a group of professors, researchers, and government officers had launched the Korean Association of African Studies (KAAS). The first meeting was held to build up mu-

⁴ I do not have any information on why a professor of Turkish studies took a directorship of an Institute of African Affairs. Prior to the establishment of the IAA, the chairman of The Korea Chamber of Commerce & Industry urged the establishment of the Institute of African and Latin American Studies in 1976 after visiting some African and Latin American countries (Anon 1976). It is not certain if this report had an influence on the establishment of the IAA, but I have been given to understand that social awareness of these countries' economic importance began to be fostered during this period.

⁵ This means that they had never been to African countries for research purposes. They were 'textbook Africanists'.

⁶ I was one of the master students at the IAA in 1987, but I dropped out after studying one semester, since there were no African specialists at the institute to guide students. I would argue that since their academic backgrounds were not in African Studies and they had never been to the continent, the professors had clear limitations in their understanding of African countries.

tual understanding of African politics, societies, cultures, and economies (Anon 1982b). KAAS began with 20 members from universities, government research institutes, and diplomats. Since then, KAAS has remained as the sole academic association of African Studies at the national level.

In conclusion, a notable thing in the first phase was the establishment of two major academic institutes on African Studies, which have been the leading institutes for African Studies since then. African Studies, in this period, was led by an exclusive group which could not really be called 'Africanists'. They had neither majored in African Studies nor visited African countries for research purposes. Still, both institutes assumed that they could form a think tank to influence the government's strategic approaches to Africa.

The Second Phase (1982~2006)

Throughout the second phase, African Studies remained in a stagnant state for a number of reasons. An initial stage of the second phase was demarcated by the establishment of the department of KiSwahili (African Studies) at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in 1983. The establishment of this department was significant since it was the first fully-fledged educational African Studies department in Korea. It would turn into the main source of producing Korean Africanists, especially in the Humanities, i.e., African languages, literature, history, and anthropology.

Negotiations to establish this department had begun much earlier, in 1976, between the Ministry of Education and HUFS. An executive director of the Ministry of Education, Taesoo Jung, consulted on the possibility of the establishment of some academic departments on African and Eastern European Studies at HUFS. An emeritus professor, Hanjin Oh, from the department of Russian Studies, later recounted the moment when he and Jung wrote a proposal for the establishment of the department of African Studies at HUFS (Oh 1991). According to him, two special measurements were taken by the government to establish the department of African Studies, and two students were given National Scholarships on KiSwahili Literature and Language as a part of the founding process. Two students from the department of German Studies applied for (and were granted) the scholarship. They went to Germany for further study; one in the field of African literature and the other in African linguistics.

The idea of establishing a department of African Studies emerged among the public officers, and the Ministry of Education finally gave a special allowance to establish the department of KiSwahili at HUFS in 1981. HUFS announced the first recruitment of students in 1982, and the first course was offered in 1983. Two students that had studied in Germany and England, respectively, returned over the next two years and began teaching students. The department has changed its name twice since⁷ and remained as the sole educational department of African Studies in Korea.

The founding of the IAA, the KAAS, and the department of KiSwahili during the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s paved the way to a balanced development between research and educational dimensions. However, only after over a decade, when the first graduates of the department of KiSwahili had completed their studies overseas and returned to occupy positions in research and teaching, was that balance really achieved. The first graduate came back in 1998 and, since 2000, multiple graduates have come back to Korea after the completion of overseas study. Departmental graduates have become one group of Korean Africanists.

Besides HUFS, since 2000, some universities (namely Seoul National University, Sogang University, Sookmyung Women's University, and Kyung Hee University) have also shown interest in African Studies and started to offer some courses for students. They have opened general arts courses and master courses for humanities, political sciences, and developmental studies within the broader field of African Studies. It is also during this period that scholars from various academic disciplines turned their attentions to African Studies and enrolled at the KAAS. They mostly come from social science academic backgrounds, especially from political science and economics. Therefore, Korean Africanists can be roughly divided into two groups: HUFS-based Africanists who specialize in the humanities, and Africanists based at other universities who are focusing on the social sciences. Of course, this categorization, which is a gross oversimplification, carries the danger of being applied too strictly. HUFS has also produced political scientists, and other uni-

⁷ The department of KiSwahili has changed its name to "Department of African Studies" in the late 1990s, and then again expanded the structure into the "Division of African Studies" in 2008.

versities, especially Seoul National University and Kyung Hee University, are strong in African literature.

Observing from the institutional perspectives, the second phase might be seen as a period of academic expansion, as African Studies successfully pushed their boundaries both in quantitative and qualitative ways. Moving on from the first phase, more opportunities for research in Africa arose as the focus broadened from only covering African language, literature, and economics. Furthermore, the number of Africanists recruited from the graduates of the department of KiSwahili and scholars from diverse academic disciplines increased. Therefore, the second phase was a 'transitional' period of African Studies moving from the dominance of 'amateur' Africanists to that of 'professionals'.

This academic development does not correspond with the public's views. Public interest in Africa has been set back since the first presidential visit to African countries in 1982. The image of Africa in the mind of the public remained in a 'primitive' state, as there existed virtually no relations between Korea and Africa; a state which even today has not changed much. With the physical and psychological distance between Korea and the African continent, public knowledge on Africa can be characterized as being ignorant, distorted, and manipulated.

All through the second phase, even though there had been the historic presidential visit to some African countries, the government paid no particular attention to Africa, which, along with the general public's ignorance of the African continent, meant that African Studies suffered from isolation in academic circles. The turning point came in 2006, when the President paid the second visit to African countries.

The Third Phase (2006-)

2006 was the most dramatic year in the development of Korea-African relations. In March of that year, the President of Korea Roh Moo-hyun paid the second visit to African countries (specifically Egypt, Algeria, and Nigeria). The main purpose of this visit was to foster economic relations between Korea and African countries, which had been neglected for centuries. After the presidential visit, the first Korea-Africa Forum was held in Seoul in November that same year and the Korean government announced the intention to organize it as a triennial forum. Also in November, Korea joined the Development Assistant Committee (DAC), which opened the way to deliver Official Development Assistance (ODA)

and Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) to African countries. Korea, which once was the recipient of developmental help by other, more 'developed' countries, now was able to assist other countries which were less developed; this was seen as a positive thing. Accordingly, African countries, for the first time, really gained attention, and many developmental projects have been designed and delivered since then. Now, scholars from the field of developmental studies poured into the realm of African Studies, while some Africanists, especially those who had a background in social sciences, moved into the field of African developmental studies. The third group of African Studies, the most practical domain of African Studies, had emerged among scholars.

The third presidential visit to African countries (South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ethiopia) took place in 2011 and, in the following year, the 3rd Korea-Africa Forum was held. In 2012, Korean Airlines launched a direct route from Incheon to Nairobi, three days a week.⁸ In 2013, the National Assembly Forum declared 'Africa's New Era'. The activity of NGOs and civil organizations on Africa began to flourish, as the government released ODA to many African countries. Public promotion to 'know Africa better and correctly' became a daily event. All of a sudden, the distance (both physical and psychological) between Korea and Africa began to get smaller.

In this new social environment, African Studies have gained other opportunities for stepping up to the other stage, namely with the establishment of new academic institutes, while some pre-existing academic institutes have changed their research areas to the African continent for a variety of reasons. A significant move towards Africa comes from the departments of French of some universities. Faced with an academic crisis as their language is losing both its influence and popularity in Korea, these departments try to adjust their academic orientations and to expand towards Francophone Africa. Some departments changed their

⁸ The route stopped in 2014 after two years of operation. The official reason was to prevent the spread of the Ebola virus, which was spreading in several African countries. However, the main reason was due to the deficit operation of the route. Since then, there has been no direct route between Korea and the African continent, before Ethiopian Airlines launched its direct route between Incheon and Addis Ababa (which actually goes from Nagoya to Addis Ababa via Incheon). This shows that the distance between Korea and the African continent remains massive.

names to “Department of Francophone Studies” or “Department of Francophone Africa”.

The Institute of Francophone Studies, Seoul National University, which was established in 1989, has extended its academic orientation to Francophone African countries, focusing mainly on Francophone African literature. Yet another institute for Francophone African studies, the Institute of Maghreb Studies at Baejae University (2000s) focuses on Maghreb countries. Kyung Hee University has opened up the Institute of African Studies in 2013; interestingly, the institute’s main research area is on Francophone Africa’s folktales. Jeonbuk National University opened up the Institute of Francophone African Studies in 2016. The Institute of European and African Studies of Hanyang University has changed its name from the Institute of European Studies to deal with the political and economic situations in African countries in 2013. The Institute of Africa and the Indian Ocean was established in 2013 with the aim of researching the literature of the Indian Ocean regions, including East African countries. Yeongsan University also has an Institute of African Studies.

It is inspiring to observe these institutes giving attention to African Studies and the founding of such institutions is a stimulating phenomenon, with the expectation of mutual collaborations to produce more qualified academic results. However, on the ground, the situation is more gloomy than rosy. Most, if not all, of these institutes are structurally fragile from a management perspective, since it is hard to secure management funds and human resources (paid researchers) from within. Therefore, institutes are heavily reliant on external research funds, such as the National Research Foundation, Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA), etc., which do not allow long-term projects for reasons which are not quite clear. Besides, for unknown reasons, these academic institutes tend not to interact with each other. There might be a rivalry based on having to compete for limited funds, or there might be a question of academic authority between those who have initiated and dominated African Studies so far and those who have joined recently from other academic backgrounds. In any case, the tendency of keeping a distance from each other is a serious hindrance for African Studies in Korea.

Despite all this, since 2006 the landscape of African Studies has faced a dramatic change as research institutes grow rapidly and more and more researchers pay attention to African Studies, which is helpful in promot-

ing African Studies. However, there are critical voices, doubting the authenticity of these newer institutes, claiming they are not determined to carry on African Studies and are only showing a temporary interest in order to 'pick up' research funds. Nevertheless, in conclusion, the third phase is the most prosperous period for African Studies in terms of governmental attention and support to Africa in diverse ways, which has resulted in establishing more academic institutes on African Studies.

Trends of African Studies Publication: Strong Political Sciences and Rising Humanities

Korean African Studies throughout the decades have shown some interesting academic trends and, in order to explain them, I am going to discuss four review articles on African Studies in Korea: Park (1996), Cho (2012), Han (2013), and Hong (2016).

Park's article was the first analytical review on Korean African Studies and in his article he analyses a total of 363 academic articles related to African Studies, written between 1955 and 1995. During this period, based on his analysis, articles dealing with the economic relationship between Korea and the African continent were dominant (157 articles), followed by those from the political sciences, in particular those focusing on international relations (137 articles), and from the humanities, mainly dealing with literature and linguistics (69 articles). This had been a period of dominance of the social sciences, which reflected the Korean government's diplomatic and economic interests on African countries. Therefore, the papers mostly take on an advisory and consultative perspective, rather than an academic one.

In his paper, Park divides the development of African Studies in this period into two phases: from the 1950s to 1980, and from 1981 to 1995. In the first phase (from the 1950s to 1980), the total number of publications in the field of African Studies was 180.⁹ The number of publications massively grew in the second phase (from 1981 to 1995), as a total of 930 publications are registered.¹⁰ This was mainly due to the fact that a major academic institute on African Studies, the KAAS, had been established

⁹ 155 academic articles, 20 books and five Master theses (Park 1996: 5). Not a single PhD thesis was published in this period.

¹⁰ 681 academic articles, 145 book publications, 70 Master theses and nine PhD theses (Park 1996: 5).

and started to publish a journal. In this period, only two journals were published: one by the KAAS and the other by the IAS-HUFS. Practically, the KAAS was also managed by the IAS-HUFS, which acted like the 'headquarters' of academic activities in Korea.

The development of Korean African Studies after 1996 is analysed by Cho (2012), Han (2013), and Hong (2016) respectively. The analysis by Cho (which starts in 1955) paints a somewhat different picture than that by Park. Cho analyses academic articles, which occupied about 60 % of the total number of 1,418 articles published between 1955 and 2012. The economic perspective still occupies 37 % of total publications, which was followed by African politics and policies (28 %) (Cho 2012:139). Although there has been a slight decline in percentage, social sciences still make up over 50 % of total publications during this period.

Cho's argument follows Park's analysis: it is after 1998 that academic articles have multiplied, especially after 2004. Over 50 academic articles are published annually in the two major Africa-related journals. After 2006, book publication also records double digits.

The IAS-HUFS made an analysis of academic theses and articles in the field of African Studies between 1962 and 2009 (IAS 2010). Before 1982, the total number of academic theses was only 25. Between 1982 and 2010, the number grew to 291.¹¹ Out of a total of 291 theses, the political sciences, i.e., African politics and economics, occupy 55 % (160). The dominance of the political sciences can be observed in academic article publication as well. According to the *Journal of the Korean Association of African Studies*, between 1986 and 2009, out of a total of 228 articles contributed to the journal, African politics occupies 26.8 % (61); followed by African economics 23.2 % (53), African cultures 16.7 % (38), literature 16.2 % (37), linguistics 12.3 % (29), and history 4.4 % (10). (IAS 2010: 5)

There is only a small number of African countries being covered in research, such as Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa, due to Korean Africanists either having studied in these countries or being taken there for their field research.

¹¹ The research was based on the theses registered at the library of the National Assembly.

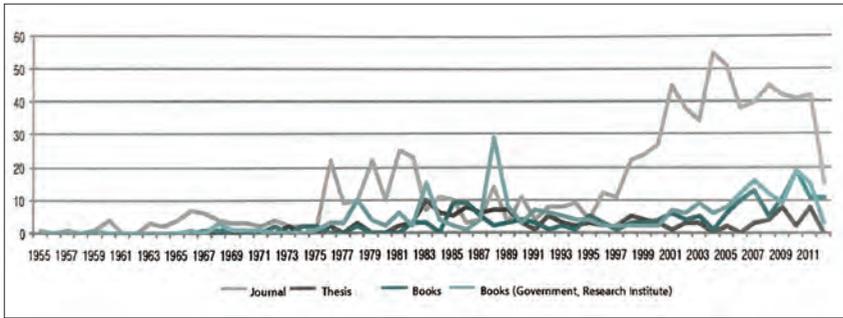


Figure 1: Academic Publications on African Studies (Cho, 2012)

Figure 1 shows that academic journals (top graph) are the major outlet of publication on African Studies, and have dramatically increased since 2000. The two graphs in the middle are book publications and also show an increase after the year 2000. The number of theses (bottom graph) fluctuates more, having one high point during 1983/1989, and a second one that is rather recent. All these graphs show that African Studies begins to emerge, in a quantitative way, around the year 2000 and has continued to increase since.

Han's (2013) and Hong's (2016) studies focus more on the academic trends of African Studies by addressing the fact that the vast bulk of published research only began at the beginning of the third millennium. Han argues that "the early studies are mainly comprised of studies focused on introducing and reviewing foreign scholars' researches in the field of politics and economics" (Han 2013: 192). This is due to the fact that, in the 'early' stage of Korean African Studies, no unique academic perspectives had yet been established among Korean scholars, and so importing Western academic approaches without any critical review was inevitable. Since then, Western approaches on African Studies have been disputed, with most of the criticism coming from an anti-colonial perspective on literature. Nevertheless, in general, the understanding of the African continent among Korean Africanists remained poor, simply viewing the continent as still occupied by 'primitive tribes' and needing to be civilized. Hong's analysis (2016) focuses on the publication of master and doctoral theses. According to her, there are a total of 686 master's theses and 48 doctoral theses registered domestically to the Research Information Sharing Service (RISS).

Figures 2 and 3, above, show the rapid increase of master and doctoral theses since the third millennium. The number of master's degree theses,

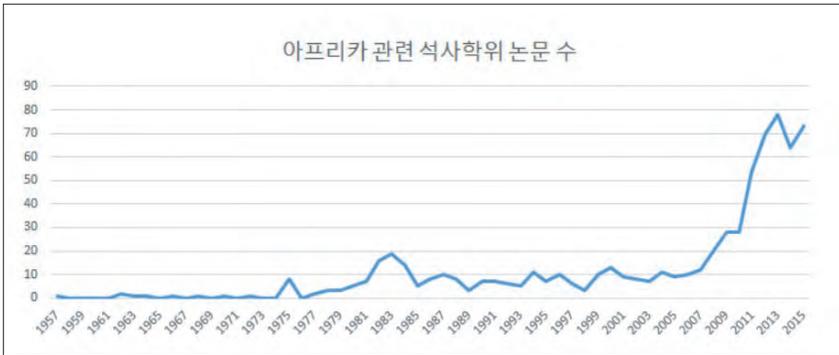


Figure 2: Number of Master Theses (Hong 2016: 376)

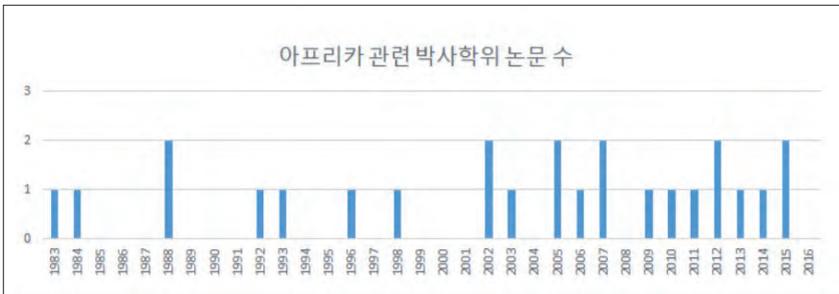


Figure 3: Number of PhD theses (Hong 2016: 378)

which exceeded 20 for the first time in 2008, has shown a quantitative growth, and especially since 2012, the number has grown up to 70 each year. Thanks to this increase, the number of master's theses related to African Studies reached 680 by 2015. This data shows that the number of theses to obtain degrees in Korean African Studies has grown rapidly in a relatively short time, despite the limited research resources, and also indicates that the number of qualified scholars in future generations is increasing.

However, the output of doctoral theses is slightly disappointing compared to the explosive growth of master's theses. As Figure 3 shows, only a couple of doctoral theses have been produced every few years until 2000. There has been some progress since 2000; however, the number remains almost the same as before. Hong analyses the phenomenon as one of the main problems Korean African Studies are currently faced with. As most of the research of Korean Africanists still remains at an 'introductory level' or 'the import of Western perspectives,' it can hardly

be expected that any profound scholarly knowledge will be reflected in students' theses (Hong 2016: 378) and, as a matter of fact, the majority of master's degree holders are willing to go overseas for further study. That is part of the reason of the sudden drop in the rate of doctorates. But the most central reason of this 'academic discontinuation' is the lack of opportunity for post-docs to find jobs. Given the way African Studies are marginalized in Korean academia, there is little hope that this structural problem will change.

Facing Challenges and Some Suggestions

The history of Korean African Studies has largely coincided with the developing history of the Korean government's diplomatic relations with the African continent. Three review articles on Korean African Studies confirm that substantial development of Korean African Studies has only occurred since the 2000s, when the Korean government took positive actions in African countries (Cho 2012; Han 2013; Hong 2016). That was when the Ministry of Education showed interest in African Studies and began to support Africanists financially.

Despite this development, some challenges for Korean African Studies have been raised continuously by scholars. Park (1996) argues in his review that African Studies are faced with three focal problems: the lack of the research funds, the shortage of researchers, and research environments dominated by political science. Twenty years later, Cho (2012) and Han (2013) point out the problems that Korean African Studies encounter, which are, by and large, concurrent with Park's analysis, albeit with slightly different nuances.

Cho analyses the problem by firstly illustrating how Korean African Studies have, since the 2000s, grown in quantity. The problem is that most of the academic papers being published fail to analyze issues currently facing Africa; they instead simply describe or introduce regional political, economical, and social situations (2012: 143-144). Cho then discusses another part of the problem, the lack of research funding, and then points towards the academic trend of 'closing off', i.e., individual researchers or academic disciplines isolating themselves as another problem (Cho 2012: 144-145). Han also points out that the shortage of researchers poses a serious problem to African Studies and the unbalanced academic systems, i.e., education and research also cause challenges to African Studies.

Han also criticizes the confrontation between two rival disciplines, i.e., humanities and political sciences, as the critical element hindering the development of African Studies (Han 2013: 168). He points out the structural problem of Korean African Studies. He classifies Korean Africanists into two groups: In the first group are only those scholars who have been trained in African languages and literature at HUFs and who have expanded their majors in humanities and social sciences. Scholars from the second group come from a range of disciplines, particularly the social sciences, and have designated African Studies as their subject of study. The former group suspects the latter of being not 'serious' and 'unorthodox' in regards to African Studies, because they take African Studies as a secondary or supplementary study to their own discipline. The second group argues that the first group lacks knowledge of the theories and methodologies of their academic disciplines, because they are merely 'area specialists.' The reason is the lack of academic communication between these two groups, and, although the KAAS accommodates both groups, their distrust of each other is a hindrance to academic cooperation. The number of Korean Africanists is relatively small, and without resolving the rivalry among themselves, the development of Korean African Studies might be faced with stagnation.

The main challenges facing Korean African Studies, which are drawn from analyzing what the different studies have in common, are: the shortage of the number of research institutes and researchers, including the delayed training of junior researchers; limited research funds; the failure of interdisciplinary approaches; the shortage of research materials. Some of these points merit some more discussion.

The small number of professional Africanists is certainly a problem for the development of Korean African Studies, and when compared to the size and number of Africanists in other Asian countries, the problem becomes even more obvious. However, I do not agree with the idea that this problem has hindered the development of Korean African Studies. The number of Africa-related research institutes is high enough to contribute to the development of the field, and I do not think that we need even more institutes. I would rather argue that the question is not the number of institutes, but their capabilities and efficiencies. Unfortunately, most of these academic institutes do not function properly. This is due to their struggle to get even the basic requirements for existence, i.e., researchers, proper research funds, and administrative back-ups. Although most of these institutes are affiliated with universities, they

do not get financial and administrative support from the universities. Accordingly, these institutes have to heavily rely on external research funds and most of their researchers are employed temporarily and only when the institutes manage to secure research funds. So most research institutes do not meet even basic requirements for carrying out consistent research projects, and are without sustainable support from external sources. In this area, the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF) acts as a major supplier of funds.

The distribution of research funds on international Area Studies in Korea is lopsided, because the focus is on countries which hold strategic importance for national interests, such as South East Asia, China, Japan, and so on. Accordingly, African Studies has always been excluded from gaining major research funds. To give just one example, 'Humanities Korea', the largest research project ever, initially claimed to prefer supporting so-called 'isolated' or 'marginalized' Area Studies. Because they were working in a typically 'isolated' area, Korean Africanists were awaiting huge research funds which would revitalize the inert Korean African Studies. However, African Studies were only given the minimal amount of research funding. Another problem concerning research funding is that it is virtually impossible to fund a long-term project, and in general the longest projects are given a three- to five-year term. Under these circumstances, research institutes cannot plan for the long term. This is one of main causes hampering the development of African Studies.¹²

The failure of interdisciplinary approaches poses another problem to the development of African Studies in Korea. Long-standing rivalries between the humanities and the political sciences in the circle of African Studies on the one hand and African Studies as Area Studies and other 'pure' academic disciplines on the other have posed serious problems in the community of Africanists. For instance, the discrepancy between

¹² There are two exceptions: IAA-HUFS has been conducting a ten-year research project, called "Humanities Korea – Overseas Regional Research" since 2010. The project's aim is basically to support the humanities, i.e. literature, linguistics, history, and so on, which have lost their academic competitiveness in academia. "Humanities Korea" is divided into two categories: The Humanities Research Field and the Overseas Regional Research Field. In the Overseas Regional Research Field, a total of 26 academic institutes are being supported by NRF, and the IAA-HUFS is one of them. NRF also sponsors a 'New Areas Studies' Project and another institute for African Studies has been selected for the project in 2013, for nine years. Therefore, two academic institutes on African Studies are currently conducting long-term academic projects.

African Linguistics/Literature and African Politics/Economics is huge enough, so communication between them is virtually impossible. Additionally, there is another huge gap between African Studies as Area Studies, which is a very practically-minded field, and other 'pure' academic disciplines, which further hampers the cooperation between them.¹³

Are there possible solutions? The reviews discussed in this study suggested paths Korean African Studies need to follow for its future development, and I agree with those, for the most part. Nevertheless, to my regret, all these reviews have missed a crucial reason for the stagnation of Korean African Studies. The problem is not solely caused by the shortage of researchers and the inadequate number of institutes. Additionally, not enough research funding is also one of conditions which hinders development. However, the most serious problem we are faced with is the lack of 'affection.' Korean Africanists or those who are interested in the domain of African Studies critically lack the seriousness of study. This may sound unscientific and unacademic, but, based on my experience as a Korean Africanist, I assume that Korean Africanists do not take the profession seriously.

Conclusion

The Korean government declared the year 2010 as the "year of strengthening diplomatic relationship with Africa." The National Assembly organized the 'Africa, New Era Forum' in 2013 along with a triennial Korea-Africa Forum. KOICA and the Korea Exim Bank begin to strengthen their aid efforts to African countries. NGOs and civil organizations held regular public seminars to promote a new image of Africa.

Towards the end of 2016, the Korean government suggested a project for the promotion of global strategic languages to enhance the relationship with globally marginalized countries, and the national parliament passed the bill. The bill covers 54 chosen languages in the world and

¹³ The Korean Association of African Studies (KAAS) is a multi-disciplinary body in which, ideally, diverse academic disciplines share and exchange academic knowledge, or try to converge these diverse disciplines in order to achieve a better understanding of diverse African issues. However, in practical terms, there is a somewhat large gap between the social sciences and the humanities, and even professionals from each academic discipline do not understand each other, and do not even try to. That is one of the crucial issues Korean African Studies is faced with.

the government allocates funds for the project. The project includes five African languages: Amharic, Hausa, Kinyarwanda, Swahili, and Zulu. Furthermore, Africa-related research and educational institutions are able to begin the sustainable development of African Studies because the project is a long-term project as the national parliament has signed on the bill.

This is a good sign of structural transformation of Korean African Studies, and, in addition, the mood of fostering Korea-Africa cooperation has never been this high before. However, Korean Africanists are still in need of proper support and attention from the government. There is a feeling right now that African Studies still remain in a state of marginalization in Korean academia and, as I have indicated, the government's indifference and public ignorance are two critical elements causing the current stagnant situation of African Studies. As I have suggested, a certain 'affection' towards African Studies would be a positive contribution to the development of the studies. 'Cliquish' attitudes among researchers, institutes, and academic disciplines are the most profound dilemma that must be dealt with. Positive collaboration among them is required for the development of African Studies and building up affection among researchers is one major way, I would suggest, to bridge the gap.

Acknowledgements

This paper has been sponsored by the Ministry of Education and the National Research Foundation of Korea in 2010 (NRF-362-2010-1-B00003). The paper is the edited version of my presentation at an international conference invited by the Institute of African Studies, University of Bayreuth.

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