

## KOREAN STUDIES AT BABES-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY in CLUJ-NAPOCA, ROMANIA

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### I. Korean Program, 1997-2005

Launched in 1997 through the support of the KOICA, the Korean program in Babes-Bolyai University (BBU)<sup>1</sup> had an initial period of being

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<sup>1</sup> The Babes-Bolyai University (BBU), founded as a Jesuit College by Prince Bathory in 1581, is considered as the oldest academic institution in Romania, and the institute embodies the entire academic tradition of Transylvania. Having gone through moves and changes and mainly being sustained as German or Latin schools, the University of Cluj was established exclusively for Hungarians in 1872 and continued until after the eastern portion of Hungary was ceded to Romania at the end of the WWI in 1919, when the University was inaugurated as the Romanian National University of Cluj. In 1940, as a result of the territorial revision imposed by Germany and Italy, the Romanian university of Cluj was moved to Sibiu and Timisoara, and the Hungarian university of Szeged was brought to Cluj. The Romanian university was returned to Cluj afterwards given with the name, "Babes." The Hungarian university named "Bolyai" was established in Cluj in 1945. The two universities were united in 1956 under the name Universitatea Babes-Bolyai, where the teaching was done in both Romanian and Hungarian. In 1995, the academic community and the Babes-Bolyai University Senate approved a reorganization of the university along three lines of study: Romanian, Hungarian, and German. This is in keeping with the historical and cultural structure of the region of Transylvania where the university town Cluj-Napoca is located. Located in a geographical area characterized by the presence of diverse ethnic and religious groups, UBB adheres to a policy of multiculturalism: 15 out of 21 faculties provide both Romanian and Hungarian curriculum; 9 provide both Romanian and German curriculum; and two faculties provide courses in Hungarian only. BBU has 21 faculties, 1,700 teaching staff, and 45,500 students: 500 international students; 3,000 doctoral students; and 4,300 secondary education teachers.

run by the volunteer instructors, Mr. Park (1997-2000) and Ms. Lee (2000-2002). During the period of five years the Korean language courses were offered in two levels: Beginner's and intermediary Korean, and they were within the Department of General Linguistic and Semiotics of the Faculty of Letters. A total of 50 students participated during the five year period.

The initial Korean program, although started with enthusiasm and commitments of the hard working instructors, had moved forward little due to the insufficient professionalism and language skills, and therefore it depended on the supervision of the Japanese staff. This initiation period of dependency left an impact on the Korean program for many years after.

The prolonged initiation period, failing to stabilize the program, ended abruptly in 2002 due to a severe cultural conflict between Korean and Romanian personnel. The Korean Program then fell into dormancy for the next two years (2002-2004). In 2004 Mr. Song, a theology student in BBU on an ad hoc basis, restarted a Korean class.

Problems during this period are explained by the following quotation. "At the time of its founding, KOICA failed to take over education programs for students from developing countries from the Education, and Science-Technology Ministries due to conflicting interests among the government agencies. It also failed to invite foreign students or launch any substantial scholarship programs, R&D support projects, or cooperative partnerships with universities, all standard approaches by advanced nations." (Lee Taejoo, Korea's ODA Activity and Partnership with Universities, Korea Focus, 2008).

## **II. Korean Program, 2005-2006**

Appointed by the Korea Foundation as a visiting professor, Park

arrived in BBU in the fall of 2005. On arrival Park began to publicize the newly invigorated program to the university community by distributing “Hangeul” pamphlets, organizing multimedia presentations and cultural activities. It was also the time to quickly readjust the teaching method, as some ideas from Korea or USA<sup>2</sup> were not applicable in this location.

The Korean Program was placed within the Oriental Languages Program coordinated by Mrs. Tamaianu-Morita, the head of Japanese Language. Park had the initial meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Morita in the Japanese office and visited the adjacent Korean room, Salla de Coreeana. Mr. and Mrs. Morita advised Park that her only contact should be with them and she should not be in contact with the Dean of the Faculty at anytime.

The Beginner’s Korean language course was initiated by the end of November with 12 students, and the Intermediate Korean language course with 4 or 6 students. However the level of the students having taken Korean in prior years was found to be less than basic. A new course, Korean Culture and Civilization, was designed to utilize multimedia presentations and to provide events for the general public. Although being new and interesting it turned out to be a very challenging course for the audience, whose minds were filled by the preconceptions and a distorted image of Korean culture. It was also difficult for the instructor as well, as she tried to convey the image of modern Korea to the incredulous and sarcastic program attendees.

As the students received no credit for the Korean course, the program faced serious discipline problems from the learners. The frustrated

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<sup>2</sup> Park used to teach and work in Cambridge and Boston, USA for past ten years and in Korea for two years before coming to BBU. Park’s teaching ideas are mainly coming from these experiences.

instructor had to prepare new lesson plans since the teaching environment was different than expected. After the first confusing semester, the class was reorganized again based on each student's language skills rather than the length of time they had studied. With the new invigorated program, learning Korean was no more just a pastime for the students. Also it was obvious that there was a need to have a better understanding of the Korean culture in order to have a breakthrough. Therefore the Korean Culture and Civilization presentation as stated above was offered on a weekly basis along with frequent cultural activities, such as, calligraphy lessons, the Korean way of tea, films and parties.

### **Salla de Coreeana**

In order to understand the program I will describe the physical layout of the Salla de Coreeana. It was a small multipurpose room used as a Korean library, lecture room, and office. But the other programs including the Japanese program also shared it as a class room and often entered without notice during Korean classes. It had 300 books and teaching materials, an audio system, a TV, a printer, a computer and a newly-purchased video projector. There also were a few pieces of Korean art including Master Yun Je's calligraphy and Jeong Insu's<sup>3</sup> painting to make it a Korean art and culture gallery as well.

### **III. Korean Program, 2006-2007**

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<sup>3</sup> Yun Je is a prominent calligrapher in Daejeon, Korea and is a Chu Sa specialist. Professor Jeong Insu from Gwangju is an excellent calligrapher and painter who has devoted herself in the field from young childhood. She accompanied her husband, Shin, a visiting artist to the Harvard Korea Institute, where Park met the couple and organized an exhibition for them.

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The Faculty of Letters appreciated the achievements the Korean Program had made, so credits were established and granted for all six Korean courses. Gaining this credit called “optional,” i.e. “extra credit” for it is not countable for the graduation credits, was a meaningful step for the Korean courses which were finally being registered for the first time in BBU history. For students, it meant receiving grades and recognition that were listed on their transcripts. The discipline problem was not totally mitigated by this change, but it was an improvement and now the goal of the program was to further pursue and receive the “obligatory” status (meaning that it could be a minor).

**Korean Courses 2006-2007**

<b>course</b>	<b>Hours / week</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>credits</b>	<b>Instructor</b>
Korean 1 (1 <sup>st</sup> yr)	4	8	3 Optional	Park
Korean 2 (1 <sup>st</sup> yr)	4	8	3 Optional	Park
Korean 3 (2 <sup>nd</sup> yr)	4	6	3 Optional	Park
Korean 4 (2 <sup>nd</sup> yr)	4	6	3 Optional	Park
Culture 1	2	12	3 Optional	Park
Culture 2	2	12	3 Optional	Park

**Cultural Activities** performed during the academic year includes:

Hangeul Day Celebration, Calligraphy Lessons, Korea Colloquium with Mr. Ambassador and his secretary, Special Presentation on the

Korean Culture and Civilization at the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca and Korean films.

The small Korean Room was occupied around the clock with the cultural activities and the continuously evolving program that was bringing something new and modern to the conservative Faculty of Letters. At this point toward the end of the spring semester 2007, the Japanese staff began to forcefully try to take control of the Korean Program. The Korean Culture and Civilization program was copied by the Japanese lecturers and came out as “Japanese Culture and Civilization,” scheduled to be taught by Mr. Morita. At the same time the Korean room and Korean program times were taken over by the Japanese program.

It became inevitable for Park to deal with the situation, if the Korean resources had been exploited by another program and controlled partially due to the success of the program. At this moment of tremendous tension and conflict, the call came from the university president’s office regarding the Korean Center’s relocation. The proposal was accepted by Park without hesitation despite the oppositions from the neighboring program.

It was yet unknown about new opening of the Korean Center, when Park wrote petitioning letters ‘for whom it may concern’s’ with a report on “The future prospects of the Korean Studies in Cluj-Napoca.” It suggested that the Korean exhibitions, film festivals, public lectures, and the Reception for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary be organized in the near future at the new venue, and it also mentioned the time for the Korean specialization and the hiring of a Romanian Korean lecturer. All these suggestions have been implemented throughout the year since then.

#### **IV. Opening the Korean Cultural Center, 31 May 2007, and the Fall Semester**

The initiative and opening of the new Korean center had been an issue discussed during the spring semester and the agreement reached to open the new Korean Cultural Center in the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (FSEGA) was finalized.

“Korea was finally recognized (at BBU) not only for its rich cultural heritage and history but also for its modernity with the remarkable scientific and economic achievements, from which both nations will benefit a great deal by opening the Korean Cultural Center. The decision was made also in pursuance of opening the opportunity for much more academic and scientific exchanges between UBB and the Korean universities in the future.” (Cluj Report, 2007)

##### **IV-1. 2007 Fall**

Through the relocation some distinct changes have occurred in the Korean Program. One of the changes is the student body, as the majority is coming from the FSEGA instead of the Faculty of Letters. A new lecture, Korean Culture and Economics, was designed for those majoring in economics. Ms. Cuc, who had just returned from Korea after finishing her year-long Korean Language Fellowship Program, joined the teaching staffs this semester. This meant that there was now a Romanian Korean Lecturer.

course	Hours / week	Number of students	credits	Instructor
Korean 1-1 (1 <sup>st</sup> yr)	4	18	3 Optional	Park, Cuc
Korean 2-1 (2 <sup>nd</sup> yr)	4	5	3 Optional	Park
Korean 3-1 (3 <sup>rd</sup> yr)	4	2	3 Optional	Park
Culture & Economics 1	2	12	3 Optional	Park

### **Cultural Activities**

1. Hangeul Day Celebration: October 9<sup>th</sup> 16:00, KCCC  
 Part 1: Introduction & “the Birth of the Great Writing System” show  
 Part 2: Birthday cake and tea & “My sassy girl” show
2. Chuseok and Ancestral Memorial Service: Public Presentation
3. Jiwon Park Yangjun<sup>4</sup> Calligraphy Art Exhibition and Gallery Talks  
 at the National Art Museum of Cluj: 23 October-4 November  
 Gallery Talks: 28 October, Sunday and 2 November,  
 Saturday afternoons
4. Park Yangjun Exhibition in Baia-Mare<sup>5</sup>: 2-28 November, City  
 Library Gallery

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<sup>4</sup> Jiwon Park Yangjun is one of the most prominent Korean calligraphy artists, the grand prize winner for both the Korean National Calligraphy Contest and the Dong-A Contest. Jiwon was invited as the guest artist for the opening of the KCCC.

<sup>5</sup> Baia-Mare is the capital of the Maramures County, which is known as Romania’s soul, a land of customs and ancient superstitions, unchanged for hundreds of years. It is about 120 KM from Cluj-Napoca to the North near the

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5. Korea Colloquium:

5-1. Today's Korean Family: 8 November, by Ms. Codruta Cuc, Korean lecturer

5-2. Colorful Mind: 23 November, by Mr. Zhang Bo, Chinese lecturer

5-3. Fallen in Love with Korea: 7 December, by Mr. Dan Brudascu, author

6. Calligraphy Lessons: Once a week: A number of students from the University of Art in Cluj-Napoca joined the KCCC class to learn Korean calligraphy art.

7. The Way of Korean Tea: Once every other week

8. Korean Film Festival: three films in November, in the auditorium FSEGA and in the Technical University auditorium for replay

9. Korean Speech Party: Korean Speech Contest, Talent Show, Game and Gift Exchange. Photos are available in the [www.kccc.ro](http://www.kccc.ro).

#### **IV-2. The Spring Semester 2008**

The courses are continued by the last semester with one change made: the 3<sup>rd</sup> year Korean was replaced by the new Drama Korean for a need to create a more open and conversational environment.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Hours / week</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Instructor</b>
Korean 1-2 (1 <sup>st</sup> yr)	4	18	3 Optional	Park, Cuc

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Ukraine border. They had only one Korean event by a North Korean artist in 1957, exactly a half century before the 2007 exhibition.

Korean (2 <sup>nd</sup> yr)	2-2	4	5	3 Optional	Park
Drama Korean (2-3 yr)		2	6	3 Optional	Park
Culture & Economics 2		2	12	3 Optional	Park

### **Cultural Activities**

1. Korean Gardens and the Way of Tea: 25 March, the House of Culture, Cluj-Napoca

Public Presentation on the Korean culture followed by a film, Scandal

2. Asian Film Festival: 4-11 April, KCCC

10 Asian films including 5 Koreans were selected to show one or two each day.

3. Korea Colloquium:

1. Seonbi and Apricot blossoms: 21 March, by Park Youngsuk

2. Imagery of the Bronze Mirror of the East Asia: 11 April, by Ms. Codruta Cuc

4. Lucian Blaga<sup>6</sup> International Poetry Festival: 7-10 May, Central Library,

Korean Poetry Presentation at the National Art Museum of Cluj

5. Korean Speech Contest and Party: 30 May KCCC

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<sup>6</sup> Lucian Blaga (1895 - 1961) is a revered Romanian poet philosopher, and dramatist. He was born in Cluj and taught philosophy at BBU. The Cluj-Napoca commemorates him through the Lucian Blaga International Poetry Festival each year.

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6. Transylvania International Film Festival, Korean Night: 31 May, Cinema Arta

Two sold-out Korean films and Reception presented by Mr. Ambassador.

**V. Korean Program 2008-2009**

V-1. Korean Specialization, 2008 Fall

The Korean language has been approved by the Ministry of Education of the state to be granted with the status A and B specializations (A is for the major; B, for the minor). The three Asian languages, Korean, Chinese, and Japanese are, thus, forming the Department for the Asian Studies (dir. Ms. Frentiu, Japanese program). The Korean specialization program started with three candidates this year.

**Curriculum for A and B specializations (BBU protocol)**

<b>Course</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>category</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>credits</b>	<b>Instructor</b>
Korean Language	Main course	A +B	2	3	Cuc
	Seminar	A +B	2	3	Park
	Practical /Culture	A	2	2	Park
Communication & Intensive Reading	Main course	A +B	1	3	Park
	Seminar	A +B	1	2	Cuc
	Practical	A +B	1	2	Cuc

The growing number of the optional Korean students from the FSEGA

is filling up the classroom. The hours for the optional Korean are reduced from 4 to 2 per week to allow the Korean courses fit better into the intensive economics major's schedule.

#### **Optional Course**

<b>Course</b>	<b>Hours / week</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>credits</b>	<b>Instructor</b>
Korean 1-1 (1 <sup>st</sup> yr)	2	25	3	Park, Cuc
Korean 2-1 (2 <sup>nd</sup> yr)	2	5	3	Park, Cuc
Korean 3-1 (3 <sup>rd</sup> yr )	2	2	3	Park
Culture & Civilization 1	2	12	3	Park

#### **Cultural Activities**

1. The Sister City Project: Suwon City delegates' visit and the Suwon Chorus Concert 28 August, 2008, BBU concert hall

2. The translation and publication of the Anthology of the Contemporary Romanian Poems: Translated by Youngsuk Park, Published by the Suwon city press, August 2008

3. Culture Presentations in Baia-Mare: 1-2 October 2008 Vasile Lucaciu College

The Way of Korean Tea: for the students

The Printing Culture of Korea: for the Librarian Conference of Maramures

V-2. 2009 Activity Plans in the House of Culture, City of Cluj-Napoca

1. Korean Culture Multimedia Presentation (DVD, Video, Power Point etc.)

1. March: Korea's Printing Heritage
2. April: Korean Gardens and Architecture
3. May: History of Seoul
4. October: Hangeul, the Birth of a Great Writing System
5. November: Korean Art
6. December: Korean Music and Dance

2. Film Festivals

1. April: 3 films
2. November: 3 films

3. Exhibitions

1. June: Photo Exhibition: Contemporary Korean Life
2. November: Calligraphy Art Exhibition