

MULTICULTURAL LIBRARIANSHIP IN JAPAN

by

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"A sense of discrimination and even racism against Korean neighbours in our community dies hard and often demonstrates itself as an expression of deplorable insensitivity to our responsibility for the past."- The Japan Times, 26 May 1990

1 An experimental approach of Ikuno Library

Approximately 70% of foreign residents in Japan are Korean citizens. More than 8 people out of 1000 residents in Japan, on average, are of Korean origin. In Osaka Prefecture, which has the largest population of Korean origin, 36 individuals out of 1000 residents are Koreans. In particular, in some of the wards of Osaka City called Ikuno-ku, we can find more than 200 permanent residents with Korean nationality out of every 1000 residents.¹

I could find only one public library which has a collection focussing on library needs of Korean residents after I had completed a survey on multicultural library services throughout the country on behalf of the Japan Library Association.

The Ikuno Library, a branch of Osaka City Library, is located near "Korea Town" in Ikuno-ku, Osaka City. According to MR. H Kiryu,² a librarian involved in services to Korean readers, at the beginning of his work in Ikuno Library, he was not aware of foreign residents although there was a Korean community near the library. Of course, he had no conception of the lack of library services to Koreans.

During 1987, the fingerprinting requirements issue raised by residents with foreign nationalities,³ together with the Seoul Olympic Games, made the librarians of Ikuno Library aware of the Korean residents around them. The library had a lot of users looking for books on the fingerprinting issue, sources of the history of Koreans in Ikuno-ku, information on Korean language schools, Korean newspapers, etc.

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Since the library could not meet these requests sufficiently at that time, MR. Kiryu visited a small private library operated by volunteers⁴ and a book store concentrating on Korean books called Seoul Shorin. Through these visits, he became aware of the

profound problems., including the crisis of self-identity, to which the second and third generation of Korean residents, who were born in Japan and are expected to live in Japan permanently, are facing.

The majority of the third generation of Korean residents speak Japanese as a first language. Korean children with good Korean language, who are very few, have no chance to make use of it. The majority of Korean children attend public elementary schools (6 years) or junior high schools (3 years) administered by local governments, where they have no chance of learning the Korean language or Korean culture.⁵ Brides who came recently from the Korean Peninsular encountered the barrier of language and culture as well.

Having found these facts, librarians at Ikuno Library reached a decision to set up a small library collection on Korea or in the Korean language, called the "Korean Books Corner".

It was on 1 June 1988 that the first experimental public library service specially intended to serve Korean residents in Japan was launched., At the beginning, the collection consisted of a total of 700 volumes, including only 50 in Korean. It has now grown to 1200 volumes, of which 200 volumes are in Korean. Once the "Korean Books Corner" had been started, a stream of requests for books on Korea became apparent. Before it was opened, there were no requests for such topics at all. As MR. Kiryu points out - "the library went unnoticed".⁶

2 Invisible library needs of the Korean residents

Japan's colonial rule of the Korean Peninsular throughout 1910 - 1945 brought millions of Koreans to Japan. They were sent to battle fields as Japanese soldiers, were killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic bombs, and were exposed to the harsh discrimination and prejudice which were systematically strengthened by the Emperor-State Government. No public schools, either in Japan or in the Korean Peninsular, provided education in Korean, with the exception of unofficial night schools supported by conscientious Japanese, who were to be totally oppressed during the war.^{7,8}

Public libraries throughout the country were organized by the Ministry of Education with the idea of encouraging in the public a "correct" idea of the Emperor-State heritage. None of the Japanese public libraries had an opportunity of meeting the needs of the Koreans, who were eager to keep their own language, texts, and cultural heritage, and not least their self identification.^{9,10}

It is said that there were 2,300,000 Korean people living in Japan when Imperial Japan was defeated in 1945. Most of them were successful in returning to their homeland, but about 600,000 Koreans were not able to leave Japan. These Koreans had Japanese nationality until the conclusion of the Peace Treaty with Japan in 1952, when Korean residents were deprived of their Japanese nationality without any choice.¹¹

Even after World War II, Korean schools were not accredited as normal schools by the Japanese government. Moreover, Korean schools which rented facilities from local governments were forced to close in 1948 by order of the General Headquarters of the Allied Powers and the Japanese government. A 16-year old Korean boy was shot and killed by police on 26 April 1948 in front of the Osaka Prefectural Office when Koreans requesting negotiation on their schools were attacked by a police troop armed with guns. To date, in Japan there are approximately 160 Korean schools, including one university managed by Koreans.¹² They are not accredited, but until now are treated as "miscellaneous" schools.¹³

According to the findings of a survey on Korean citizens living in Kanagawa Prefecture at the end of 1984,¹⁴ more than 90% of Koreans have both a Korean name and a Japanese name. More than 70% of the Koreans were afraid of, or had experience of, racial discrimination against Koreans in the classroom and/or on the way to school. Use of their Japanese names is a measure of self protection by which they may hide their ethnic background to avoid insupportable attacks of racial discrimination. The realities of both visible and hidden discrimination against Koreans in all aspects of social life, such as employment, the education system, including library services, marriage, housing, etc, have discouraged them in the development of their ethnic identity.

Professor Kim, who is the first Korean professor with life-tenure in a Prefectural University in Japan, pointed out that the exceptionally high rate of suicide among Korean residents in the Osaka Prefecture is a result of the loss of self-identity, caused by the discrimination against Koreans. Because of this he appealed to Korean brothers and sisters living in Japan to purchase books written by Korean residents, so that they could share their identity and express their feelings, agonies and discriminations through the mass-media.¹⁵ I found, when I spoke to Professor Kim in 1988, that he had not at that time given any consideration to public libraries.

Hence, I may summarise, that although there were several private libraries managed by Koreans, there existed no public library services intentionally meeting the needs of the Korean residents, who were struggling for self-identification within a severely

discriminatory society, until the first experimentally developed public library service to Korean users of Ikuno Library was launched in June 1988.

3 A Survey on Multicultural Library Services

The 52nd General Conference of IFLA held in Tokyo in 1986 approved professional resolutions on the promotion of library services to multicultural populations in Japan.¹⁶ After the IFLA General Conference, a lot of librarians and library school professors referred positively to the impact of the resolutions.

In response to an inquiry on the follow-up of the resolutions, the Japan Library Association reported to the Chairman of the Section of Library Services to Multicultural Populations of IFLA in March 1988 that they were intending to send a questionnaire on multicultural library services to libraries throughout the country.¹⁷

In this way, I was asked to formulate immediately a questionnaire to identify multicultural library services as they were at that time on behalf of the Japan Library Association. In consideration of the fact that average librarians were not aware of the needs of minority residents in society, I prefaced the questionnaire with a short explanation of the concept of multicultural library services in the Japanese context as follows:

"Within our society, approximately 900,000 foreign people of 140 nationalities, including 700,000 Koreans, are living today. Both refugees from Indo-China and relatives of Chugoku Kikoku-Koji [many Japanese children brought up in China by Chinese parents-in-law after World War II have recently returned to Japan] are included with foreign residents as well. The numbers of students and workers from abroad is growing rapidly. We also have 3,000,000 travelers and crews from overseas each year.

"People with Japanese nationality also have various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Associations of Ainu, who are the indigenous people of Japan, demand the eradication of the severe prejudice and discrimination against them. They also strive to preserve their language and their cultural heritage. Chugoku Kikoku-Koji and Japanese children who have adapted themselves to a "foreign" community where they have grown up, and who have been using a language other than Japanese, are facing a profound problem caused by the differences of language, social system and the customs of everyday life. Those who have become naturalised, or who have parents of differing nationalities, have to overcome in some way the crisis of self-identity caused by their different cultural backgrounds.

"In this way, people facing prejudice and discrimination as well as their language and cultural problems., due to their ethnic or cultural backgrounds, are considered to have various and particular library needs. For the majority in a society, a correct understanding of cultures and backgrounds of minorities without prejudice, together with a knowledge of their languages, forms the basis to a truly international cultural exchange. Thanks to the evolution of transportation and telecommunication, we now send six million people overseas each year, and a break from convention is needed to construct a society in which individual cultural heritages can coexist with mutual respect.

"IFLA defines the library services meeting such needs as Multicultural Library Services, and gave its approval to resolutions on the promotion of Multicultural Library Services in Japan at its General Conference in Tokyo.

"The purpose of this survey is to identify the status quo of Japanese Multicultural Library Services."¹⁸

The questionnaires were sent out in April 1988 to all public libraries and to university and college libraries throughout the country, except for branch libraries. I received 1992 responses, and the response rate was almost 100%.

4 Findings of the survey of 1988

Findings of the survey which was carried out as a supplementary survey to Nippon no Toshokan [Annual statistics of libraries in Japan] are as follows:¹⁹

- 1 The most striking result is the fact that 55% of public libraries answered that they have no foreign users in spite of the fact that there are no municipalities in the country which do not have residents of foreign origin. Public libraries in Osaka and Tokyo show the highest rate, approximately 80% awareness of foreign users
- 2 Less than 3% of public libraries had prepared users' guides in languages other than Japanese. The languages used in the guides were English, German, Chinese and French, Not a single public library offered a users' guide in Korean
- 3 Less than 3%, again, of public libraries had signposting or notices for the user in English in the library. No other foreign languages were found
- 4 Less than 1% of public libraries had a program of continuing education designed to enrich the conversational ability of their staff librarians in languages

other than Japanese

5 Only 10% of public libraries answered that they would accept applications for employment from people without Japanese nationality. However, more than 50% of public libraries in the Osaka Prefecture may employ librarians of foreign nationality. There are no laws or regulations which deny public libraries the right to employ librarians with other than Japanese nationality. The questionnaire did not ask for the actual number of librarians of foreign origin, as this was thought to be too sensitive a question to ask. However, I estimate that few, or no, Korean librarians are working in public libraries

6 Approximately 1% of public libraries had guidelines relating to multicultural library services

7 4% of public libraries answered that they received requests from foreign users. Among 39 responses which described the requests in detail, most were concerning European languages, and the rest were related to Chinese

8 The analysis of library materials in languages other than Japanese showed that 45% of public libraries had some materials in foreign languages, and that 29% of all public libraries were aware of foreign users but did not hold any materials in foreign languages

9 An analysis on Korean language collections told us that less than 4% of public libraries added some kind of Korean materials to its collections in the fiscal year 1987. Korean books, 20; Korean journals, 7; Korean newspapers, 2; Korean audio-visual materials, 11. These figures are the net number of libraries which added these forms of materials to their collections out of 1,147 responding public libraries

10 Throughout the responses there was none which described our indigenous population, the Ainu, although there were several broader questions which may include services to minorities other than foreign residents 20

11 845 responses from university and college libraries, junior college libraries and technical college libraries showed that they were aware of the presence of foreign users (88% among university and college libraries) and obviously they had a large number of foreign materials. Since these libraries are almost completely separated from the general public, they are concentrated towards students from abroad at best. Because of limited time for this paper I must abandon going

further into university and college libraries, though meeting the needs of students from abroad is another subject of importance needing discussion

5 Conclusion

The majority of Korean residents in Japan usually use their Japanese names to hide their nationality so that they can avoid the severe attacks of discrimination and prejudice which they would otherwise encounter. This is despite the fact that they cannot be distinguished from Japanese by their physical appearance.²¹ Naturalisation is not particularly difficult for them, but most Koreans refuse to naturalise for a variety reasons.²² They will continue to live in Japan as Koreans.

Determined Koreans have been struggling to develop their ethnic identity and trying to encourage Koreans to use their own Korean names. After Japan's ratification of the International Covenants on Human Rights in 1979, which caused a series of rapid changes in Japanese laws,²³ these movements have more openly been encouraged. I believe that the library needs of Korean residents is becoming more apparent, in line with the development of their ethnic identity.

The impact of the resolutions of the IFLA Section of Library Services to Multicultural Populations in 1986 has encouraged conscientious librarians to examine their work from the viewpoint of minorities in society, and made them aware of the lack of multicultural library services in the country.

The past three years have seen the dawn of multicultural librarianship in Japan, and the following advances, in addition to the services of Ikuno Library, have been noticed: A Japanese translation of *Multicultural communities: guidelines for library service* was published by the Asian Center 21 in Osaka. Revised Japanese standards for public libraries included services for minorities and foreign residents.²⁴ Private libraries dedicated to the needs of Korean residents and managed by Koreans have been introduced to librarians through the media of journals.²⁵ The first seminar on multicultural library services was held in Osaka in September 1989.²⁶ And Tabunka Service Network, a Japanese journal dedicated to multicultural library services, has been founded by Professor Y Fukai of Hannan University in Osaka.²⁷

An excellent museum on Ainu cultural heritage and a private library for children established by the Ainu was vividly reported in *The Library Journal*.²⁸ For Ainu population, the Rekishigaku Kenkyukai [History Researchers' Association] adopted a resolution calling for the passage of a new law. "The Declaration said that since the late 19th century the Japanese government has forcibly taken over the Ainu's traditional territory, 'depriving them of their racial dignity'".²⁹

Finally, I would like to stress, in particular, the importance of international cooperation to develop multicultural library services in each country. The positive impact of the professional resolutions at IFLA Tokyo General Conference on encouragement of multicultural library services in Japan is one solid example of the efficiency of international cooperation through IFLA.

The Section of Libraries for the Blind of IFLA, the Japan Association of Libraries for the Blind and the Japan Library Association are going to hold an Asian Seminar on Library Service to the Visually Handicapped in Developing Countries in Tokyo in late January 1991. The seminar will provide librarians from Asian developing countries with a basic training course on library services to the visually handicapped by professional session leaders from various countries, and discussion sessions on guidelines of assistance to developing countries, including collection development, copyright clearance and international interlibrary loan.

The Seminar is anticipated not only by people serving the visually handicapped but also by librarians hoping to provide minorities in society with talking books in their heritage languages.³⁰ In addition, people struggling for literacy in both developing and industrialised countries have become aware of the importance of recorded materials during the International Literacy Year 1990.

I am confident of the new horizon which will be opened to us by the success of the IFLA Asian Seminar, of library services to meet the needs of multicultural populations in both Japan and other countries, including the visually handicapped or the illiterate.

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3 Lie, John The discriminated fingers: the Korean minority in Japan in Monthly

review Jan 1987 pp17 - 23

4 One of the private libraries intended for those wanting to know Korean or Asian culture called Ikaino Chosen Toshō Shiryōshitsu [Ikaino Korean Materials Center] was established on a voluntary basis by teachers and students of Osaka University of Foreign Language in 1977. Although its lending section is closed at the moment because of administrative reasons, its Korean Language Class has been teaching Korean language for Koreans and Japanese alike. Asia Center 21 in Osaka (General Secretary MR. K Sakaguchi, a member of IFLA Section of Library Services to Multicultural Populations Standing Committee) has a library holding of some 20,000 titles of a collection on Asia. Kinshū Bunko in Hyogo and Seikyū Bunko in Osaka are libraries with good collections on Korea and they are open to the public. Nevertheless, they are privately established by Koreans.

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6 See Kiryu, note 2

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16 For the full text of the resolutions and a comment by MR. M Foster on the background of the resolutions, see Journal of multicultural librarianship Vol 1 No 2, Nov 1986 pp45 - 48

17 Journal of multicultural librarianship Vol 2 No 2, March 1988 pp41 - 42

18 Extracted from the introduction of the Questionnaire on multicultural library services of the Japan Library Association

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1989 pp254 - 258

20 MR. Shigeru Kayano, the founder of Ainu Minzoku Shiriyokan [Nibutani Ainu Heritage Museum] has been hoping to have a complete archive on the Ainu population, published throughout the world, within his museum. He has been threatened by the local government with deportation from his homeland, where the largest Ainu village exists, for the sake of building a new dam across the river near the village. He claims that no other country in the world denies the right of its indigenous populations to fish from the river near their home

21 See Kinbara etc, note 14

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